

Looking Back at the Century of Population

Along with the spread of democracy, the advent of television and the Internet, and ventures in space, population change was a distinguishing characteristic of the 20th century. World population rose to 6 billion in 1999, from under 2 billion in 1900. But what besides growth was going on?

To answer that question, PRB asked experts from around the world to create lists of what they felt were the 20th century's most important population trends and events. Their submissions were fascinating and wide-ranging. We chose highlights from each of their lists to emphasize both the breadth and the magnitude of the changes they cited from the 20th century—now the new “last century.”

Joseph Chamie, *director, UN Population Division*: “The 20th century was the most remarkable century ever demographically, and it is unlikely to be repeated in the future. It had more demographic firsts than any other century: the highest rate of growth; the highest annual increment; the shortest period in history to add a billion people; unprecedented declines in fertility; unparalleled increases in life expectancy with dramatic declines in mortality; and rapid urbanization and the emergence of megacities.”



Dhaka, Bangladesh, emerged as a megacity during the last century. It will be the fifth largest city in the world in 2015, with a population of 19.5 million.

Jean-Claude Chesnais, *senior research fellow, Institut National d'Etudes Démographiques (Paris)*: “U.S. supremacy—a high-tech population with sustained growth; the changing ethnic composition in the United States and possible integration of the two Americas; and the changing religious composition of Europe, where Islam is becoming the second religion of a growing number of countries.”

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New Study Claims Abortion Is Behind Decrease in Crime

Abortion is a divisive and emotional issue. Add racial overtones and the implication that public officials do not deserve all the credit for reductions in crime during the 1990s, and combustion is inevitable. Informed debate is not.

Stanford Law School professor John J. Donohue III and University of Chicago economist Steven D. Levitt ignited a debate last August when they released a study on the relationship between abortion and crime. Their findings suggest that legal abortions have prevented the births of many would-be criminals. The absence of these people, according to their research, is behind at least half of the dramatic drop in crime rates seen between 1991 and 1997.

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Population Milestones of the 20th Century *Continued from page 1*

Leon Bouvier, *adjunct professor of demography, Tulane University School of Public Health*: “The incredible decline in fertility in Europe in such a brief period; the Bangladesh fertility decline; the AIDS epidemic in Africa; and increased immigration to western European countries.”

Mercedes Concepcion, *member, Board of Commissioners, Philippine Population Commission; professor emeritus, University of the Philippines*: “The increase in the absolute numbers and proportions of older persons. With falling fertility rates and lengthening life expectancies, the populations of Asia and the Pacific are aging rapidly. ... The modern household has fewer members to generate mutual physical and emotional support. Consequently, the support of young children and older persons presents more difficulties than in the past.”

Fred Sai, *president, Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences; former president, International Planned Parenthood Federation*: “I would rate the development of hormonal contraceptives, particularly the pill, as the most important technological development. I consider article 14(f) of Bucharest [1974 UN World Population Conference], which gave couples and individuals the right to family planning, a fundamental change to make programs much more accessible to those who need them. The gradual evolution of NGOs as partners with a voice at both national and international levels has helped with relevant policy and program evolution. [And] with the founding of the UNFPA in 1969, the UN system showed how important it considered population and related issues.”

Toshio Kuroda, *chairman, Japanese Organization for International Cooperation in Family Planning*: “The Chinese government decided to implement its ‘one child per couple’ policy in 1979. *The Limits to Growth* published in 1972 by the Club of Rome drew worldwide attention to the effects of popula-

tion increase on economic growth and human survival. [And] the First Asian Population Conference was held in New Delhi in 1963. It was the first official conference where population policy including family planning was discussed.”

Francisco Alba, *professor, El Colegio de México*: “The virtual stagnation of population growth in economically rich, industrialized countries along with increased population in economically poor, technologically laggard, and incipiently industrialized societies; the enfranchisement of women; and the fluid nature of couples in families (greater incidence of divorce and more partners in a lifetime).”

A.R. Nanda, *secretary, Indian Department of Family Welfare; former census commissioner*: “The educational attainment of the population (literacy) and a minimum standard of education; drinking water facilities and sanitation; decreases in infant and child mortality; antenatal care; and acceptance of family planning.”

Pape Syr Diagne, *director, Centre for African Family Studies (Nairobi)*: “The International Conference on Population and Development [in 1994] and the broadened definition of reproductive health (population issues and numbers are not key but people and their health are); Margaret Sanger and the Planned Parenthood movement; and the transition from large, extended families to smaller, nuclear families in sub-Saharan Africa.”

Nafis Sadik, *executive director, UN Population Fund*: “Countries have initiated the adoption of population policies; promotion of gender equality and equity, and women’s empowerment; adoption of broad reproductive health/rights policies; prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS; and increased access to education for women and girls.” ■

Webwise

www.prb.org • www.ameristat.org • www.popnet.org • www.measurecommunication.org

The following were posted recently on PRB Web sites:

Race and Ethnicity

Minority representation in Congress is just one of the trends summarized on PRB’s newest Web site, AmeriStat, under the category “Race and Ethnicity.” Other trends include fertility rates, mortality risk, and occu-

pational segregation. (www.ameristat.org/racethnic.htm)

Population Bulletins

Excerpts from “Population and Health: An Introduction to Epidemiology,” the December 1999 *Population Bulletin*, are on PRB’s main site. (www.prb.org). Also on the site are full text versions of several other

Bulletins: ■ World Population Beyond Six Billion ■ America’s Racial and Ethnic Minorities ■ Population Change, Resources, and the Environment ■ Population: A Lively Introduction ■ Gender, Power, and Population Change ■ Infectious Diseases—New and Ancient Threats to World Health ■ International Migration: A Global Challenge.

Teen Birth Rate Continues to Drop

Less Sex, More Education, Changes in Contraception Seen as Key Factors

After rising sharply between 1986 and 1991, the teenage birth rate continued its decline for the seventh year in a row in 1998. Two recent surveys of teens, supported by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), suggest that this much heralded good news may be linked to:

- a decrease in sexual activity
- an increase in the use of condoms and injectable contraceptives that offset a decline in pill use
- the impact of AIDS prevention education
- declining approval among teens of premarital sex.

The decline in births to teens is not linked to an increase in abortion; in fact, abortion rates for teens have been declining since 1988.

The National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) reported that the percentage of teenage women who had sexual intercourse in 1995 leveled off and possibly declined for the first time after increasing steadily for more than two decades. It found that 50 percent of women ages 15 to 19 had ever had intercourse. A previous survey found that 53 percent of 15-to-19-year-old women had ever had intercourse in 1988, an increase from 47 percent in 1982. Earlier surveys found the percentages to be 36 percent in 1975 and 29 percent in 1970.

The National Survey of Adolescent Males (NSAM), carried out by The Urban Institute, confirmed a similar trend for teenage men. The percentage of never-married men ages 15 to 19 who have ever had sexual intercourse declined from 60 percent in 1988 to 55 percent in 1995, reversing a trend measured since 1979.

The share of sexually active teens not currently using contraception remained relatively stable, according to the surveys. The NSFG documented that 7 percent of sexually active teenage women ages 15 to 19 were not using a contraceptive method in 1995, compared with 8 percent in 1988. On a related measure, the NSAM found that the share of 15-to-19-year-old men who reported that neither they nor their partner had used a condom or a female contraceptive method at their last intercourse had changed little: 20 percent in 1995 compared with 23 percent in 1988.

However, both surveys found large increases in the use of contraceptives at the time of first

intercourse. Among women of all ages, some 76 percent of all those who began having intercourse in the 1990s used contraception at first intercourse, up from 64 percent in the late 1980s, according to the NSFG.

The increase in contraception at first intercourse was a result of marked increases in condom use: from 18 percent in the 1970s to 36 percent in the late 1980s and 54 percent in the 1990s. Similar increases in the use of contraceptives by teenage males or their partners at the time of first intercourse were reported. Also, the NSAM found a growing share of men used condoms consistently; 45 percent of men ages 15 to 19 reported always using condoms in 1995, up from 33 percent in 1988.

More recent findings reported from the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey, conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, confirm the results of the two NICHD-supported studies. The new survey shows that among teenagers attending school, sexual activity declined and condom use increased in the 1990s through 1997.

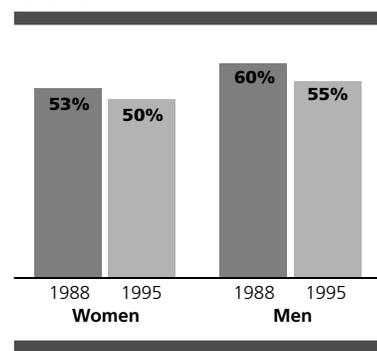
Getting the Message on Safe Sex

These increases in condom use during the 1980s and early 1990s may be related to another finding of both NICHD-supported surveys: near-universal HIV prevention education. The NSFG found that 90 percent of women ages 18 to 19 reported having received formal instruction on sexually transmitted diseases, safe sex to prevent HIV, and how to say no to sex. Similarly, the NSAM reported that in 1995 for males ages 17 to 19 living in metropolitan areas virtually all had received HIV prevention education (96 percent) and most also received information about birth control (87 percent) and sexually transmitted diseases (88 percent).

Along with increases in condom use, the NSFG found a drop in pill use by teens using contraception, from 59 percent in 1988 to 44 percent by 1995. Implant and injectable contraceptives appear to have partially offset the

Drop in Sexual Activity

Percent sexually experienced teens ages 15 to 19



Sources: NSAM and NSFG.

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Teens Increasingly Disapprove of Premarital Sex *Continued from page 3*

decline in pill use among teen women. These longer-lasting methods are more effective than oral contraceptives for preventing pregnancy, so even small increases in their use can have an important impact on pregnancy rates. The use of implants or injectable contraceptives, which were unavailable in 1988, rose to 3 percent among non-Hispanic white teen contraceptive users and to 8 percent among black teens by 1995.

The decline in teen birth rates cannot be linked to any one factor. Changes in sexual activity and increases in condom and injectable contraceptive use played different roles for different groups of teens.

For teens who had already given birth, the increased use of injectable contraceptives and, to a lesser extent, implants, appear to have played the largest role. For black teens, increases in condom use were also an important factor, while changes in sexual activity may have been more important for white teens.

Another finding of the NSAM may explain the drop in sexual activity among teen males: The survey found growing disapproval of premarital sex among teenage males, reversing a steep increase between the late 1970s and 1980s. The share of men ages 17 to 19 living in metropolitan areas who approved of premarital

sex when the couple did not intend to marry dropped from 80 percent in 1988 to 71 percent in 1995.

The NSAM also found that receiving AIDS prevention education was linked to lower levels of sexual activity, which suggests that education on safe sex and condom use did not lead to more sexual activity.

For More Information:

This article is excerpted from the December 1999 edition of *Today's Issues*, briefing papers prepared by PRB for the Demographic and Behavioral Sciences Branch, Center for Population Research, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, National Institutes of Health, phone: 301/496-1174. ■

Drop in Crime Linked to Legalized Abortions *Continued from page 1*

Were the researchers just trying to stir up controversy with their results? Not at all, according to Donohue. "I was asked to write a paper on why crime was falling. In the course of looking at ... various social programs and their impact on crime, I sort of stumbled across the data on abortion."

The "sheer magnitude" of abortions prompted Donohue to dig deeper. When he and Levitt did, they found three factors especially compelling:

The timing. The abrupt drop in crime coincided with the coming of age (roughly 20 years later) of young people born after the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion. Also, in states where abortion became legal before 1973, the drop in crime started sooner.

The magnitude. States with high abortion rates have experienced more dramatic declines—the authors estimate 15 percent higher declines—in crime.

The pervasiveness. The reduction in crime has occurred both in cities that have waged war on an acknowledged cause of violent crime, crack cocaine, and in cities relatively untouched by crack. Similarly, crime has fallen both in cities that have expanded their police forces and changed policing techniques and in cities that have not changed their policing techniques or expanded their police forces.

The researchers also observed a decrease in the *rate* of crime among young people. Young people ages 18 to 24 engage in more criminal activity than any other age group. If the size of the 18-to-24 population decreases, whether because of lower birth rates or because of any other event, the number of crimes also drops. But Levitt and Donohue identified a decline in the rate of crime in this age group, signaling that there was more behind the drop than a shrinking population.

The Demographics of Abortion

The researchers then looked at abortion demographics and noted that women who have abortions tend to be young, unmarried, and poor. Children born to these mothers, like children of mothers who have little education or who do not want to be mothers, are at higher risk for committing crime, according to the authors. If today's 18-to-24-year-olds did not include as many of these high-risk children, that might explain the group's lower per capita crime rate.

The authors stress that the availability of legalized abortion may not simply have reduced fertility but may also have delayed it and improved the environment of subsequent children. Wanted children who are born to married, supportive parents are less inclined toward criminal behavior. In many instances, the authors reason, abortion may

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Homeless Americans

Troubled childhoods and low levels of education are common among America's homeless, as are alcohol, drug, and mental health problems, according to a new report released by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The report presents findings of the most comprehensive study ever of the homeless in this country, based on the 1996 National Survey of Homeless Assistance Providers and Clients. It gives demographic characteristics of currently and formerly homeless people.

The report also analyzes the effects of help from federal and other programs. With housing assistance and services such as health care, substance abuse treatment, mental health services, education, and job training, 76 percent of those living in families and 60 percent of those living alone end their homeless status.

The top priority of homeless people surveyed was to get a job, and 44 percent of them worked at least part-time during the month before the survey. The technical report, *Homelessness: Programs and the People They Serve*, is available on the HUD Web site: www.huduser.org/publications/homeless/homeless_tech.html. (See "Spotlight Statistic" on page 7 for more data from this report.)

Saudi Women Gain IDs

Women in Saudi Arabia will soon be provided with their own identi-

ty cards, according to an article in the Nov. 10 edition of *The Guardian*. Saudi women are currently listed on the papers of a male relative, usually the husband or father.

The decision to issue ID cards to women was announced by the deputy interior minister on Nov. 8. The article reported that liberals see the decision to issue ID cards to women as a step in the right direction—one that might even lead to more women driving. The article noted that a week before the announcement a UN official had urged Arab countries to tackle women's rights to help stop population growth.

Girl Scouts Take on AIDS

As part of the 1999 World AIDS Campaign With Children and Young People, the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts will begin a project to combat HIV/AIDS. Girl Guides and Girl Scouts—who number 10 million and span 150 countries—can earn a badge for work they do to prevent AIDS and to care for people living with the disease in the community. The project is co-sponsored by the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS and by the International Council of AIDS Service Organizations. Details are available online: www.wagggs.org/projects/un aids.html.

India's 'Silent Emergency'

More than half of all Indian children under the age of 4 are mal-

nourished, and 60 percent of Indian women are anemic, according to a recent World Bank report. The report, *Wasting Away: The Crisis of Malnutrition in India*, estimates that malnutrition costs the country at least \$10 billion every year in lost productivity, illness, and death.

Despite these estimates, the report notes that India has improved food production and distribution. Yet problems in effective targeting, implementation, and coverage have hampered progress in raising nutritional status.

Although poverty accounts for the high level of malnutrition in India, the status and lack of education of women also contribute. Women and girls receive less than their share of household food and health care. And women often eat less during pregnancy, motivated by the fear of delivering a large baby.

The report recommends targeting food distribution efforts to the poor and targeting the national mid-day meals program by area, using low educational attainment and poverty criteria.

For more information, contact Rebeca Robboy in Washington, D.C., phone: 202/473-0699, or Geetanjali Chopra in Delhi, phone: 91-11-461-7241. ■

In PRB News

2000-2001 Fellows Program in Population Policy Communication

Summer 2000, Washington, D.C.

The Fellows Program in Population Policy Communication, conducted by the Population Reference Bureau, helps researchers in developing countries who are pursuing doctoral degrees at universities in the United States and Canada communicate their

findings to policy audiences. The deadline for applying is Jan. 14. For information and application forms, contact Elizabeth Ransom at PRB (e-mail: eransom@prb.org). Or access forms on the Web site: www.measurecommunication.org.

Policy Seminars

From September to May, PRB hosts monthly noontime seminars on demographic trends and

policy issues at its Washington, D.C., office. The seminars are free and open to the public.

To receive regular notices of upcoming seminars, contact PRB at 202/483-1100; fax: 202/328-3937; e-mail: popref@prb.org; Web site: www.prb.org. ■

Fewer Criminals, Less Crime? *Continued from page 4*

have given young, single, poor, and often minority women time to mature, get jobs, marry, and become more economically stable and then have children who would have a lower risk for committing crime.

Strong Reactions

Interest groups have questioned where this research leads. Abortion supporters, wary of a study that could be misconstrued as promoting eugenics through abortion for the poor and for blacks, have interpreted the findings carefully: "Healthy women, healthy children, and healthy families are beneficial for society as a whole, and the right to choose legal abortion is instrumental in promoting all three of those," said William Lutz, a spokesman for the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League.

The National Right to Life Committee issued a press release acknowledging that the staff of the organization had not read the study but that they rejected "the notion that the appropriate way to solve any of society's problems is to kill unborn children." Americans United for Life general counsel Nikolas T. Nikas concluded: "We've been presented with a new twist to the old adage: 'Stop the criminal before he commits the crime.' Does this mean executing a death penalty before any crime is committed?"

Criminologists have also weighed in, focusing on how the research was done rather than on the controversy it has stirred. Charles Wellford, acting chair of the Criminology and Criminal Justice department at the University of Maryland, heard Levitt present the research recently and was impressed with the care that

went into it. "Levitt's a serious guy. He's not after inflammatory results." Nonetheless, Wellford noted problems with the research methods. For crime, he said, "aggregation at the state level masks trends within states" and county-level analysis would be more useful, but abortion data are unavailable at the county level. Also, the research relies on crimes known to the police as an indicator, whereas a crime victimization survey "would be a better measure of what's going on out there," said Wellford.

Alfred Blumstein, J. Erik Jonsson University Professor of Urban Systems and Operations Research and director of the National Consortium on Violence Research at Carnegie Mellon University's Heinz School, shared the view that the research was carefully done. But he disagreed with its conclusion that abortion accounts for as much as half of the downturn in crime. "They're probably onto something. Abortion may be relevant, but it's a much more complicated story than they were able to deal with," said Blumstein. He noted that the researchers had not accounted for factors such as the changing prevalence of handguns and changing drug markets. He also noted that the researchers should have disaggregated crime by single year of age: "One would expect that, if the abortion argument were the case, there would be a sequence of peaks in successive [age] cohorts. But in 1994, everyone started down, at all ages."

Revisions and More Debate

Some of these criticisms may be addressed in a revision that is underway. Donohue believes the final version of the

study may be out in the first quarter of 2000.

When Donohue and Levitt's research is finally released, there will no doubt be even more debate. But as for greater scrutiny, that depends on people's ability to do what James Finckenauer, a professor with Rutgers University's Institute for Criminological Research, said he did: "Step back and say, 'If I look at this objectively, putting aside the emotional sort of implications, what does this tell me?'"

"It's a funny thing about criminology," said Finckenauer. "All of a sudden in this decade we have witnessed these dramatic declines in crime rates. ... But now we're hard pressed to explain why this is occurring. It's almost as if it were easier before this occurred to explain why we have the kind of crime that we have. But to explain the converse has not been so easy."

And that, according to Donohue, is the point. "People are always pushing that it's because of the way [New York City] Mayor Giuliani polices or because of the vast increase in incarceration that we're getting the drop in crime. To the extent that this paper is correct, you would attribute less of the drop in crime to those other factors. And that might suggest less reliance on those other factors as a method of crime control. If this paper gives us insight into that, that's very valuable. It can help us from going down the wrong path." ■

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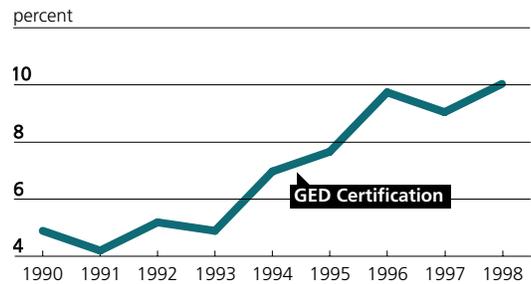
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Speaking Graphically

More Youths Take Alternative Route to Finish High School

During the 1990s, the high school dropout rate remained relatively unchanged (around 5 percent of high school students); however, the percentage of young adults with an alternative certification (the General Educational Development, or GED) increased from 4.9 percent in 1990 to 10.1 percent in 1998, and the percentage with regular diplomas decreased by a similar amount. With the cost of not completing high school rising, education experts speculate that more people may be opting for the GED because they are unable to meet the testing requirements instituted recently by many states. Because of conflicting evidence on the effect a GED has on an adult's employment status and earnings, some researchers question the advantages of promoting GED programs for youths still young enough to attend high school. The report *Dropout Rates in the United States: 1998* is available online from the National Center for Education Statistics: www.nces.ed.gov.



Note: Data give the percentage of 18-to-24-year-olds not enrolled in high school or below who have earned a high school credential.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, October (various years), in U.S. Department of Education, *Dropout Rates in the United States: 1998*, NCES 2000-022 (Washington, DC: GPO, December 1999): table 6.

World Population

As of Jan. 2000	6,024,000,000
Annual growth	84,000,000

Population of the United States

As of Oct. 1, 1999	273,895,000
As of Oct. 1, 1998	271,319,000

U.S. Population Update

	12 Months Ending With December		Rate	
	1998	1997	1998	1997
Live births	3,946,000	3,882,000	14.6	14.5
Fertility rate	—	—	66.0	65.0
Deaths	2,331,000	2,294,000	8.6	8.6
Infant deaths	27,600	27,000	7.0	7.0
Natural increase	1,615,000	1,588,000	6.0	5.9
Marriages	2,244,000	2,384,000	8.3	8.9
Divorces	1,135,000	1,163,000	4.2	4.3

Note: Fertility rate is given per 1,000 women ages 15-44; infant deaths per 1,000 live births; other rates per 1,000 population.

Source: National Center for Health Statistics, *National Vital Statistics Reports*, vol. 47, no. 21 (1999).

Spotlight Statistic: Homeless Parents

Currently Homeless Clients	Parental Status
37%	No children
42%	Children under 18
15%	Children over 18
6%	Children under and over 18

Source: Martha R. Burt et al., *Homelessness: Programs and the People They Serve, Findings of the National Survey of Homeless Assistance Providers and Clients*, Technical Report, prepared for the Interagency Council on the Homeless (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 1999). For more on this report, see "In the News," page 5.

Note: Additional information and sources for population estimates are available on the *Population Today* appendices page of the PRB Web site: www.prb.org/poptoday/ptappend.htm.

The Muddle About the Middle Class ...

The United States has no monetary standard for defining the "middle class."

To some, the middle class is the middle section—the middle 60 percent—of the U.S. household income distribution. By this definition, an estimated 165 million people lived in middle-class households in 1998. (The "upper class," according to this definition, would be the top 20 percent; the "lower class" would be the bottom 20 percent.)

However, these 165 million people lived in households with incomes that ranged between \$16,117 and \$75,000 in 1998, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. As defined by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, the official poverty threshold for an average family of four in 1998 was \$16,660—\$543 greater than the lower income limit of the middle 60 percent of the income distribution.

Family composition and size determine federal poverty thresholds, so they are lower for small families and higher for large families. (For example, a family of one adult and one child was considered poor if it made less than \$11,234 in

1998, while a family of two adults and five children was considered poor if it made less than \$24,395.) Most likely, some of the people in the middle class would have been considered poor under the official poverty definition.

A more refined definition of middle class—one that gets around this dilemma—focuses on the relationship between family income and the poverty level. That is the approach the Federal Interagency Forum for Child and Family Statistics takes in its annual report, *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Child Well-Being*. When analyzing the family income of children, it defines "medium income" children as those living in families with incomes between 200 percent and 399 percent of the official poverty threshold (between \$33,320 and \$66,639 for a family of four). Using the "200 percent to 399 percent of poverty" standard, about 88 million Americans—33 percent of all people for whom poverty status is determined—lived in families that could be classified as middle class.

Although this definition is useful in determining the size of

the American middle class, it has some drawbacks. Many, if not most, Americans define middle class in lifestyle terms, including anyone with enough income to afford the items that produce a middle-class lifestyle—a home, a car, a television, major appliances, air conditioning, and other conveniences. In addition, the official poverty standard does not account for geographic variation in the cost of living. For example, the median price of an existing single-family home in 1998 in San Francisco was \$321,700; in Peoria, Ill., it was \$83,300.

...But 'Over the Hill' Is Clear

People don't like to think of themselves as being "over the hill." But all the term means, technically, is that a person has passed the halfway mark of his or her life expectancy. According to 1997 life tables produced by the National Center for Health Statistics, the halfway mark for males would be 38 years. For females, it's 40.5.



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