

2014 Index of Culture and Opportunity

The Social and Economic Trends that Shape America



Edited by
Jennifer A. Marshall
Rea S. Hederman, Jr.

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Jennifer A. Marshall
Rea S. Hederman, Jr.

Preface

Jim DeMint

It is significant that this *Index* focuses on both culture and opportunity. I learned early on, from personal experience, that these two notions are intertwined. My two brothers, my sister, and I were reared by our single mom with a work ethic that shaped who I am today.

We struggled economically but my mother provided a model that showed us the importance of work and personal responsibility. To sustain our family, she started a ballroom dancing business in our home. She worked all the time, but also expected us to do our share. So each morning, we would get up at 6:00 a.m. to find our personal list of duties for the day. Passing the time without doing something constructive was not an option.

While we each pulled our weight, the more we did, the more we felt we could do and the more confidence we gained. Growing up in Greenville, South Carolina, a small textile town, strengthened that feeling. There was a general understanding that each person was important and could make a difference in the lives of others.

My story, and similar stories shared by so many Americans, reveals a fundamental truth about our nation: The presence of opportunities may influ-

ence an individual's prospects for the future, but the culture of a family or community affects the extent to which the individual takes advantage of those opportunities.

This *Index* presents an at-a-glance view of cultural trends in America such as marriage rate, religious participation, and community involvement. These trends are presented alongside data regarding poverty, dependence, workforce participation, and educational and employment opportunities.

While data do not equate with destiny, and each individual makes choices and decisions that impact the course of his or her own life, examining the aggregate trends in each of these arenas can reveal some insight into the general direction in which our nation is moving.

From my earliest experiences in life, I learned that circumstances today do not determine how the future will unfold—we can build a better life for ourselves. That is why we have produced the *2014 Index of Culture and Opportunity*—to show where we are now as a nation and to strengthen our resolve to get America back on track.

—*Jim DeMint is President of The Heritage Foundation and author of Falling in Love with America Again.*

Introducing the 2014 Index of Culture and Opportunity

Jennifer A. Marshall and Rea S. Hederman, Jr.

The 2014 Index of Culture and Opportunity tells how social and economic factors relate to the success of individuals, families, opportunity, and freedom. Through charts that track changes, and commentary that explains the trends, the *Index* shows the current state of some key features of American society and tells whether specific indicators are improving or getting off track.

What We Track

The *Index* tracks social and economic factors related to culture, poverty and dependence, and general opportunity in America. In order to monitor trends and measure our country's progress, this report includes 31 indicators in three categories based on regularly updated national data:

- **Cultural indicators**, including data on family, religious practice, and civil society;
- **Poverty and dependence indicators** related to marriage and poverty, workforce participation, and welfare spending and participation; and
- **General opportunity indicators**, such as measures of education, jobs and wealth, and economic freedom.

How We Track

For each indicator, we provide the most recent year of data available as of March 2014 and historical data, including the change over the past one, five, and 10

years.¹ Data for each of the 31 indicators are shown in chart form. A red line designates the main indicator; in some cases, related data are displayed alongside using grayscale lines. A key above each chart shows the change over one-year, five-year, and 10-year periods (with exceptions in the case of a few indicators).

The primary focus of this *Index* and the commentators' contributions is the 10-year change and whether it is on the right track. By using a 10-year change, we are able to observe what has happened over a longer period of time, rather than focusing on a single year. This longer time horizon gives readers a feel for what has been happening regardless of who is President, which party controls Congress, or the state of the economy at any particular time. While examining changes from one year to the next can be helpful, annual data may not always be the most reliable tool for determining overall movement in the right or wrong direction. This is particularly true with data that are affected by the business cycle, such as labor market indicators and data on poverty. It is also true for cultural trends that typically change quite gradually.

Commentary Providing Context

To give context to these indicators, we have invited a variety of scholars within The Heritage Foundation, and at other organizations, to provide commentary. Heritage scholars Ryan Anderson, William E. Simon Fellow, and David Azerrad, Director of the B. Kenneth Simon Center for Principles and Politics, survey the landscape of the entire report in

their introductory essay. They discuss social and economic factors and the role of these factors in overcoming poverty and dependence, and generating opportunity.

Each of the three sections opens with a topical essay to set the stage for the indicators. Kathryn Lopez, journalist and senior fellow at the National Review Institute, comments on the cultural indicators section. Larry Mead of New York University writes on the significance of work and marriage in the poverty and dependence indicators section. Two Heritage scholars—Lindsey Burke, Will Skillman Fellow in Education, and Stuart Butler, Director of the Center for Policy Innovation—team up on an essay about the relationship between education and general opportunity in the final section.

For select indicators, we have asked experts to provide commentary on the trend in that indicator and what it shows about culture and opportunity generally in America. These highly respected scholars draw on knowledge in their field that is both broad and deep. Their contributions provide a helpful guide for non-specialists to navigate the data presented in the *Index*.

Their commentaries also allow readers to gain insights from a wider range of research. While data from many interesting surveys and reports did not fit the specific criteria for inclusion as indicators in this *Index*, the contributors have drawn on their broad knowledge of their fields to include additional relevant data and research.

Why It Matters

The Heritage Foundation seeks to advance conservative public policies based on the principles of free enterprise, limited government, individual freedom, traditional American values, and a strong

national defense. This *Index* is part of a set designed to assess our nation's strength in these areas. It is the second in a trilogy of Heritage indexes that will measure America's economic, social, and military strength to help inform the policy conversation both in Washington and across America.

Policymakers will find the foundational data they need to address issues involving:

- marriage, family, and civil society;
- welfare reform;
- reduced spending;
- economic growth; and
- the opportunity of individuals in a free society to improve their circumstances.

Citizens can use this *Index* to equip themselves to engage in conversations—whether at a town hall meeting with elected officials or right at the dinner table with the next generation of citizens—about the future of this great nation.

Culture matters, and our actions shape it. We shape it as we make choices individually, and as we make our voices heard in the political process, from our city halls to Washington, D.C. The *2014 Index of Culture and Opportunity* will assist all those striving to advance an America where freedom, opportunity, prosperity, and civil society flourish.

—**Jennifer A. Marshall** is Vice President for the Institute for Family, Community, and Opportunity at The Heritage Foundation. **Rea S. Hederman, Jr.** is Executive Vice President of the Buckeye Institute and former Director of the Center for Data Analysis, of the Institute for Economic Freedom and Opportunity, at The Heritage Foundation.

1. For several indicators for which annual data are not available, the intervals vary.

Executive Summary

The *Index of Culture and Opportunity* tracks key social and economic indicators to determine whether important indicators of opportunity in America are on the right track. Expert commentary explores the factors that shape our capacity as a society to enjoy the blessings of liberty today and to pass them on to the next generation.

The *Index* reports on 31 indicators, based on widely recognized, regularly updated national data. Each indicator's change over the last 10-year period for which data are available provides a way to see whether the indicator is, overall, heading on the right track or wrong track.

		RIGHT TRACK	WRONG TRACK
Culture	Marriage Rate (p. 20)		○
	Divorce Rate (p. 20)	●	○
	Total Fertility Rate (p. 22)		○
	Single-Parent Households (p. 23)		○
	Teen Drug Use (p. 24)		○
	Abstinence Among High Schoolers (p. 25)		○
	Abortion Rate (p. 26)	●	○
	Religious Attendance (p. 28)		○
	Volunteering (p. 29)		○
	Violent Crime Rate (p. 30)	●	○
Poverty & Dependence	Labor Force Participation (p. 43)		○
	Unwed Birth Rate (p. 45)		○
	Self-Sufficiency (p. 47)		○
	Total Welfare Spending (p. 48)		○
	Subsidized Housing Participation (p. 49)		○
	Food Stamp Participation (p. 49)		○
	TANF Participation (p. 50)	●	○
	TANF Work Participation Rate (p. 50)		○
General Opportunity	Reading Proficiency (p. 61)		○
	Charter School Enrollment (p. 62)	●	○
	Private School Choice Participation (p. 63)	●	○
	High School Graduation Rate (p. 64)	●	○
	Student Loan Debt (p. 64)		○
	Employment-Population Ratio (p. 65)		○
	Unemployment Rate (p. 65)		○
	Job Openings Rate (p. 66)	●	○
	Job Hires Rate (p. 67)		○
	Money Taxed Away by Federal Government (p. 68)		○
	Start-Up Job Share (p. 69)		○
	Major Federal Regulations (p. 70)		○
	Economic Freedom (p. 70)		○

Highlights from the 2014 Indicators

Section 1: Culture

- From 2001 to 2011, the marriage rate dropped by 10.3 marriages per 1,000 unmarried women, or 22.8 percent. Since the 1960s, it has fallen by about 50 percent. “[T]he nation’s retreat from marriage,” writes W. Bradford Wilcox, “means that only about half of the nation’s adults are currently married, and that about half of the nation’s children will spend some time outside an intact, married home” (pp. 20–21).
- America’s total fertility rate declined by 0.14 births per woman between 2002 and 2012. Since 1972, it has reached the replacement rate of 2.1 only twice, in 2006 and 2007, as Jonathan V. Last explains (p. 22).
- The U.S. abortion rate dropped by four abortions per 1,000 women of childbearing age between 2001 and 2011, continuing a trend that began in 1980. “The 2011 rate for the nation is the lowest since 1973,” writes Charles A. Donovan (pp. 26–27).
- From 2002 to 2012, the violent crime rate declined by 107.5 crimes per 100,000 people, or 21.7 percent. This continues a “two-decades-long victory over crime,” as Heather Mac Donald explains (pp. 30–31).

“Democracy needs a flourishing civil society, the backbone of which is people of conscience who look out for their neighbors, who raise and support families, who take matters of human dignity either as Gospel truth or as a moral imperative to protect and uplift. The cultural indicators that follow help us to take stock of our efforts in this regard—and a number of them do not give us a good report. But the indicators are grim only if we resign ourselves from our responsibilities to one another.”

–Kathryn Jean Lopez,
“Renewing Our Culture,” p. 18

Section 2: Poverty & Dependence

- From 2003 to 2013, the labor force participation rate for adults ages 25 to 54 fell by 2 percentage points. “U.S. labor force participation began falling gradually in 2000—a decline that accelerated sharply after the onset of the Great Recession,” writes James Sherk (pp. 43–44).
- The unwed birth rate rose 6.7 percentage points between 2002 and 2012. As Ron Haskins explains, “Nonmarital childbearing is one of the preeminent reasons this nation, despite spending about \$1 trillion a year on programs for disadvantaged families, is struggling to reduce poverty and increase economic mobility” (pp. 45–46).
- From 2002 to 2012, self-sufficiency—the ability of a family to sustain an income above the poverty threshold without welfare assistance—declined as the percentage of individuals living in poverty increased by 2.9 percentage points (pp. 47–48).
- The work participation rate for recipients of cash welfare declined by 5 percentage points from 2000 to 2010. As Robert Doar points out, it has not risen above 30 percent since 2006: “Restoring the original purpose of welfare reform requires reinvigorating the work participation rate” (pp. 50–51).

“America’s greatest strength is its civil society. And central to this civil society is family and the capacity to provide for one’s own through work. Traditionally, Americans have worked hard to advance themselves and their families—an effort that, in turn, produces this country’s extraordinary wealth. But an important part of America seems to be opting out of this strenuous, yet rewarding, life. For the most part, serious poverty occurs in America when employment and family break down.”

—Lawrence M. Mead,
“Opting Out of the Burdens of Freedom,” p. 41

Section 3: General Opportunity

- The percentage of 17-year-olds proficient in reading has remained flat despite massive spending increases for public education (pp. 61–62).
- Charter school enrollment and private school choice participation have made impressive progress over the past 10 years, each rising by more than 200 percent. As Virginia Walden Ford explains, “More than 300,000 children are attending private schools of their choosing thanks to options like vouchers, tuition tax credit programs, and education savings accounts” (p. 63).
- The average student loan debt held by each year’s graduates with loans increased by \$4,612 between 2001 and 2011. Average student loan debt now stands at \$26,500 (in 2012 dollars) (p. 64).
- From 2004 to 2014, the percentage of GDP taken by the federal government in taxes has increased by 1.7 percentage points (p. 68).
- From 2001 to 2011, the percentage of Americans working at start-up companies dropped 0.4 percentage point. As Tim Kane observes, “Unfortunately, bureaucratic regulations are growing at the same time start-ups are declining” (p. 69).

“Effective education is an important foundation for upward mobility. The quality of a child’s education can determine whether the child is able to grab hold of, and advance on, the ladder of opportunity. Yet thousands of elementary and secondary schools across the country are underperforming ... [while] colleges suffer from a crisis of both quality and cost, strapping students with debt without guaranteeing they acquire the necessary skills or academic content mastery to prepare them for career success.”

–Lindsey M. Burke and Stuart M. Butler,
“Climbing the Ladder of Upward Mobility Through Education,” p. 59

Summary Observations

Social and economic factors contribute to opportunity. The *Index of Culture and Opportunity* looks at a range of cultural and economic indicators that play a part in opening or closing the doors of opportunity. Strong families and communities, a culture that promotes virtue, limited government, and economic freedom all matter for the future of opportunity in America.

Character matters, on both an individual and a community level. It provides the capacity to maintain the blessings of liberty. As David Azerrad and Ryan Anderson write, “The underlying premise of the *Index* is that opportunity is not merely the absence of artificially imposed impediments. It is also the capacity to pursue happiness, individually and in community.”

The family centered on marriage plays a critical role in providing the foundation necessary for the individual enjoyment of freedom and pursuit of opportunity. Correspondingly, the breakdown of the most basic institution of marriage has profound repercussions across the indicators reported here. In

just one example, Lawrence Mead explains how non-marriage and non-work are intertwined (pp. 41–42).

Policy incentives influence individual choices and shape the environment in which individuals are able to pursue opportunity. Welfare policy that offers a handout rather than a hand up has discouraged work and marriage. Regulatory and tax burdens are hampering the capacity of entrepreneurs to launch new job-creating ventures.

Focus and leadership make a difference. The majority of the indicators reported here are on the wrong track, but a number of those that are heading in the right direction have this in common: They have received sustained focus across a variety of platforms. The well-documented failures of public education have led to sustained and successful calls for greater educational choice. Four decades of pro-life effort in culture and law correlate with a declining abortion rate. As Kathryn Lopez’s introduction to Section I discusses, it is possible to get our culture back on track through hard work, creativity, and concentrated effort to change policy and society.

Policy Implications

Policy should be formulated on the basis of sound principles and data. The indicators included in this *Index* help to identify obstacles to opportunity in order to help citizens and policymakers focus on cultural efforts and policy solutions that will best address these challenges. The policy implications of the data and commentary contained in this volume include the following:

- Pursue policy that promotes life, marriage, and religious liberty (pp. 20–21, 26–29).
- Promote limited government and respect the role of civil society, particularly its norms that are conducive to strong individual and community outcomes (pp. 24–25).
- Advance welfare reform that encourages self-sufficiency through work rather than dependence on government (pp. 47–51).
- Promote student-centered education reforms that allow for choice (pp. 62–63).
- Pursue higher education reform that tackles issues of cost and quality by allowing greater innovation (pp. 59–60, 64).
- Reduce Americans’ tax burden (p. 68).
- Pursue tax and regulatory reform to restore an environment that is conducive to entrepreneurial job creation (pp. 69–70).

The Blessings of Liberty

David Azerrad and Ryan T. Anderson

The Preamble to the Constitution of the United States contains what may well be the clearest and most concise description of the principal purpose of the American project: to “secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity.” This short clause gives us two profound insights into the nature of America.

First, while liberty matters, so do the blessings that come from liberty. Liberty makes possible the pursuit and the attainment of happiness. Second, as Americans, we seek not merely to enjoy the blessings of liberty for ourselves, but to pass them on to the next generation. Only when we see our descendants enjoying the blessings of liberty will we know that we have lived up to this responsibility.

There are, indeed, no guarantees that the next generation will reap these blessings. They must be raised to do so. But how is their character to be shaped? Which virtues and which habits of mind are required to preserve freedom? And who is responsible for this crucial task?

Our Founding Fathers, busy as they were securing the hard-won independence of the fledgling republic, did not leave us a systematic answer. However, by surveying their writings and reasoning through the principles they laid down, we can discern four broad pillars that together sustain our republic:

1. A limited constitutional government
2. A vibrant civil society with free markets
3. Strong families
4. A culture that promotes virtue

These four essential elements reinforce one another. By limiting the size and scope of government, we allow families and the voluntary associations that comprise civil society to flourish while also enabling the government to perform its critical functions. By sustaining a culture that promotes the virtues befitting a free people, we allow citizens to find and pursue happiness within civil society. The Founders’ vision ultimately points to a limited constitutional government undergirding a vibrant civil society composed of strong families and voluntary associations and guided by a moral compass.

Over the course of recent decades, however, our culture has taken a wrong turn. Our government has thwarted opportunity and created impediments to family and community. The erosion of marriage and the unraveling of community among vast segments of the population, combined with a rise in government dependence and failures in public education, have weakened the social fabric of America. These are worrisome trends that do not bode well for the future.

This *Index* aims to track, over time, the health of our culture and the opportunities available in America. Ultimately, of course, these things cannot be definitely quantified. That is why the *Index* does not compound the individual metrics into a total score. Trends, however, can be followed and this is just what the *Index* aims to do.

The underlying premise of the *Index* is that opportunity is not merely the absence of artificial imposed impediments. It is also the capacity to pursue happiness, individually and in community.

And that capacity is forged primarily in our families, friendships, religious congregations, communities, and in the innumerable associations we form.

It is here, in this vast realm between the individual and the state, that people pursue and find happiness. In America, we use our freedom to come together. “Americans of all ages, all conditions, all minds constantly unite,” Alexis de Tocqueville wrote in *Democracy in America*. “Not only do they have commercial and industrial associations in which all take part, but they also have a thousand other kinds: religious, moral, grave, futile, very general and very particular, immense and small.” Americans, Tocqueville concludes, have mastered the science of association, which he calls “the mother science” in democratic countries.

A Culture of Opportunity

The family is the foundation of a strong society. In the family, the next generation of free citizens learns the virtues that set the stage for the orderly pursuit of happiness and the good life. Parents have the primary responsibility for the moral and religious upbringing of their children. What children learn from their parents will in large part determine whether children have a strong work ethic, steer clear of drugs and crime, defer gratification, and obey the rules. The home is a child’s first classroom, with great potential to awaken their curiosity and supplement their formal education.

To understand the centrality of the family, one need only see the host of problems that so often confront the children raised in homes without fathers, from lower graduation rates to greater incarceration rates. For those who are concerned about the vitality of the American Dream in the 21st century, strengthening the family ought to be an absolute priority. Far from being a tangential social or religious issue, the strength of the family is a crucial concern—both from an economic and political perspective—and deeply intertwined with the health of the country.

Beyond the family, we come together not only in religious congregations and communities of faith, but also in businesses, trade associations, charities, babysitting co-ops, bowling leagues, reading groups, and countless other associations. These combine to form a fabric that unites citizens around mutual interests and, in so doing, teaches us the great art of self-government. Freedom is not merely the absence of tyranny. Citizens must also know how to be free.

We learn how to govern ourselves in the variety of relationships we forge.

Through these associations, citizens develop a taste for independence, cultivate their judgment, and learn how to exercise their freedom in a responsible manner. Most importantly, we learn to improve our own lot and address problems in our communities through our own initiative and by relying on our neighbors and fellow Americans. This staves off the impulse that expects the state to remedy all of life’s ills—an impulse that is, if unchecked, fatal to liberty in the long run.

Lastly, civil society is also the realm of opportunity, both the opportunities created by markets—whose defining feature is *voluntary* exchange—and the opportunities that grow out of the other communities and networks we belong to. Without these opportunities that bring us together, there can be no American Dream to move ahead in life.

The Robust Ties that Bind

To grasp the centrality of family and civil society to the American way of life is to reject the false choice between radical individualism and togetherness-through-government some promote. What conservatives stand for is togetherness through family, community, and association.

The question is not whether we will be independent or dependent. To be human is to rely on others. At issue, rather, is whom we will depend on. Families, friends, and neighboring fellow citizens who know us best and have our best interest at heart—these should be our primary sources of support. And, when government must help, it must not weaken these ties, supplanting and replacing them, but instead encourage people back into gainful employment, stable families, and communities of every sort. Policy should help bring people together, not create artificial roadblocks that keep them apart.

A government that recognizes limits to its reach allows civil society to flourish. A government that claims jurisdiction over every sphere of life suffocates civil society. The greater the size, scope, and reach of the state, the more disjointed, disconnected, and weakened civil society and individuals will be.

Revitalizing civil society means cultivating an environment in which the permanent institutions of family and religion, along with associations of every kind, can flourish and fulfill their role in cultivating and maintaining ordered liberty in America.

As the American experience over the past 50 years has shown, limiting the size and scope of government is impossible without stable marriages and strong communities. When the family disintegrates, the government attempts to replace its vital functions, social welfare programs multiply and, as they grow, family and neighborhood bonds erode. A defense of marriage serves the ends of limited government more effectively, less intrusively, and at less cost than picking up the broken pieces of a shattered marriage culture. Fundamentally, then, social and economic conservatism are indivisible.

The stakes could not be higher. The robust ties that bind us together ultimately are the strength of our great nation. It is here that we reap the blessings of liberty and here that we hope to see our posterity do so as well.

—*David Azerrad is Director of the B. Kenneth Simon Center for Principles and Politics, of the Institute for Family, Community, and Opportunity, at The Heritage Foundation. Ryan T. Anderson is William E. Simon Fellow in the Richard and Helen DeVos Center for Religion and Civil Society, of the Institute for Family, Community, and Opportunity.*

Section One

Culture

Culture Summary

- From 2001 to 2011, the marriage rate dropped by 10.3 marriages per 1,000 unmarried women, or 22.8 percent. Since the 1960s, it has fallen by about 50 percent. “[T]he nation’s retreat from marriage,” writes W. Bradford Wilcox, “means that only about half of the nation’s adults are currently married, and that about half of the nation’s children will spend some time outside an intact, married home” (pp. 20–21).
- America’s total fertility rate declined by 0.14 births per woman between 2002 and 2012. Since 1972, it has reached the replacement rate of 2.1 only twice, in 2006 and 2007, as Jonathan V. Last explains (p. 22).
- The U.S. abortion rate dropped by four abortions per 1,000 women of childbearing age between 2001 and 2011, continuing a trend that began in 1980. “The 2011 rate for the nation is the lowest since 1973,” writes Charles A. Donovan (pp. 26–27).
- From 2002 to 2012, the violent crime rate declined by 107.5 crimes per 100,000 people, or 21.7 percent. This continues a “two-decades-long victory over crime,” as Heather Mac Donald explains (pp. 30–31).

Culture Indicators

	RIGHT TRACK	WRONG TRACK
Marriage Rate (p. 20)		○
Divorce Rate (p. 20)	●	
Total Fertility Rate (p. 22)		○
Single-Parent Households (p. 23)		○
Teen Drug Use (p. 24)		○
Abstinence Among High Schoolers (p. 25)		○
Abortion Rate (p. 26)	●	
Religious Attendance (p. 28)		○
Volunteering (p. 29)		○
Violent Crime Rate (p. 30)	●	

Renewing Our Culture

Kathryn Jean Lopez

There is no sugarcoating it. With each passing year, on most cultural fronts, things have been getting worse. There is a coarseness to our society and a rending of real ties that bind us to one another. Only about half of Americans are currently married, and about half of the children in the U.S. will spend time outside a household with a married mom and dad.¹ Whatever the circumstances, that has an impact on people and culture, and it shows up in indicators from fertility rates to teen drug use. Our brotherly social safety net is fraying, and we now look to government instead, compounding our problems. After all, bureaucracy doesn't do love as well as civil society does.

The brave new world of family life today, with seemingly endless prospects for future chaos, makes one nostalgic for the days when we were at least agreed on some of the fundamentals for a good, healthy home environment for children and women and men. Our lack of a common vocabulary and understanding of human nature has made public opinion—and now even our lawmaking and courts—susceptible to wild claims about truth and tolerance in spite of social science evidence about marriage and family to the contrary. Devoid of reason, history, and tradition, these claims simply wouldn't have made any sense a few decades ago.

As recently as a decade or so ago, a sensitive cultural observer might have referred to “broken homes” without the prospect of a politically correct shutdown. That shutdown of serious dialogue about the direction of our society is a hallmark of what has been dubbed an “Insatiable New Intolerance.”² As a

powerful, thinly veiled intolerance has established its power—throughout the culture: in education, the entertainment industry, medicine, and politics—the outlook can seem grim for anyone holding traditional views of marriage, family, and life.

Even knowing this all, however, there is some good news. Despite the fact that the United States has among the most permissive abortion laws in the world, abortion is on the decline. Public opinion is also headed in an encouraging direction. Polling commissioned in early 2014,³ consistent with other polling, found that nearly half of Americans consider themselves “pro-life,” with three in 10 Americans considering themselves “strongly pro-life.” Importantly, polling found that “84% of Americans believe abortion should be restricted ... or never allowed at all.” Even those who wouldn't necessarily label themselves “strongly pro-life” or “strongly pro-choice” support placing limits on abortion and providing women accurate information. The abortion lobby's insistence on pretending that even late-term abortions are a mere matter of women's freedom is not accepted by most Americans.

Familiar, widespread, euphemistic rhetoric about abortion actually reflects an encouraging reality about our culture. Throughout the decades, campaigns for abortion rights have had to take the turn of referring increasingly to “choice” and “health” and anything “women.” That rhetoric has been necessary to sell Americans on legal abortion, since abortion is a source of revulsion and regret for most and a necessary, in the view of some, evil at best.

America is a generous country built on the inviolable dignity of the human person.

Practical efforts to restore a culture of life are an encouraging development that bodes well for the prospects for tackling other cultural indicators heading in the wrong direction. Creative initiatives provide pregnancy support and maternity care for those in need. They teach basic skills and nurture community life and fellowship for mothers⁴ and fathers and their children.

In addition to the ministries and projects devoted to helping women in crisis pregnancies, efforts in the past decade have increased outreach to the women who bear the pain of abortion regret. Project Rachel, for example, is a well-known model.⁵ Observing that “Abortion Changes You,”⁶ these efforts have sought to serve the woman and those with whom she is most intimately connected. The culture of generosity that has been the ecumenically pervasive lifeblood of American history is making a palpable difference.

That spirit of community and service has driven efforts to lift up human dignity in the darkest of places: our nation’s prisons. The work of the Prison Fellowship and some of the state-level re-entry programs focusing on skills and fellowship, opportunity and accountability, is also some of the best of our culture. The news that violent crime is down at the same time is legitimately encouraging. Of course, anyone who lived through the ’80s and ’90s in an inner city as I did in Manhattan doesn’t need to see the numbers to notice the sea change.

All of this civil-society work provides models for the renewal of the culture more broadly. There is much to be alarmed about in the culture, as this section chronicles. The breakdown of marriage and family life—with more children growing up without a married mother and father and fewer married couples having children—affects every aspect of American life.

But just as four decades of persistent activism, education, service, and prayer have brought us to a point where the tide is turning on abortion, a similar level of commitment can affect the cultural landscape as it pertains to marriage and family life. Just as progress is being made on crime and even divorce rates, we need to strive for a culture in which women and men see one another as complementary and needed by one another, made for one another and for the children whom they have participated in creating, who are completely and most naturally dependent on them.

We will need to recover a common language and moral grammar that reflects our shared tradition and experience of cherishing life, family, and community. Our responses must take into account the realities, wounds, and lessons from the cultural havoc of recent decades. Our efforts must be true to both nature and history and pursue persuasion and coalition building. We must tell the stories of what works, pointing to the people and groups who are restoring a culture of life, marriage, and religious liberty.

Democracy needs a flourishing civil society, the backbone of which is people of conscience who look out for their neighbors, who raise and support families, who take matters of human dignity either as Gospel truth or as a moral imperative to protect and uplift. The cultural indicators that follow help us to take stock of our efforts in this regard—and a number of them do not give us a good report. But the indicators are grim only if we resign ourselves from our responsibilities to one another.

—*Kathryn Jean Lopez is senior fellow at the National Review Institute and editor-at-large of National Review Online. A nationally syndicated columnist, she is also founding director of Catholic Voices USA.*

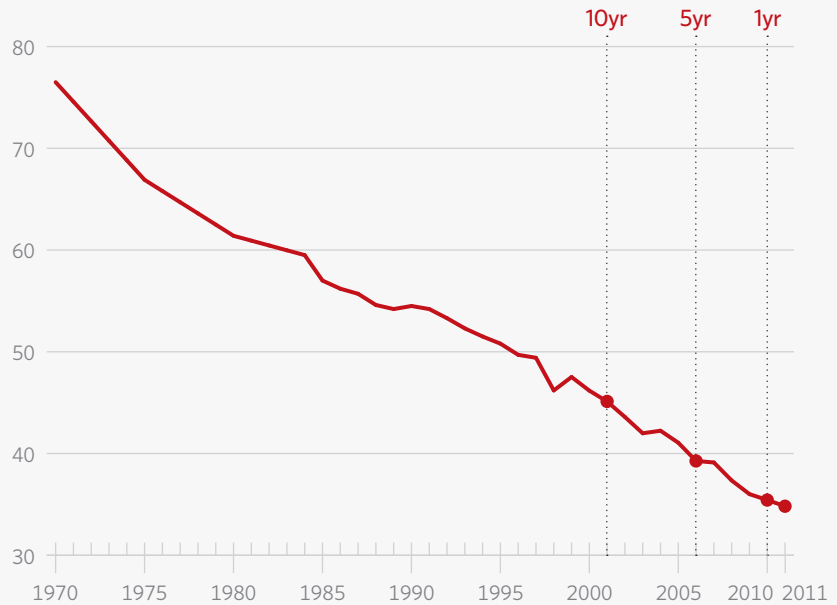
CHANGES 10-year ▼ 10.3 5-year ▼ 4.5 1-year ▼ 0.6

Marriage Rate

From 2001 to 2011, the marriage rate dropped by 10.3 marriages per 1,000 unmarried women ages 15 and older.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, and U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey.

MARRIAGES PER 1,000 UNMARRIED FEMALES AGES 15 AND OLDER



CHANGES 10-year ▼ 0.4 5-year ▼ 0.1 1-year No change

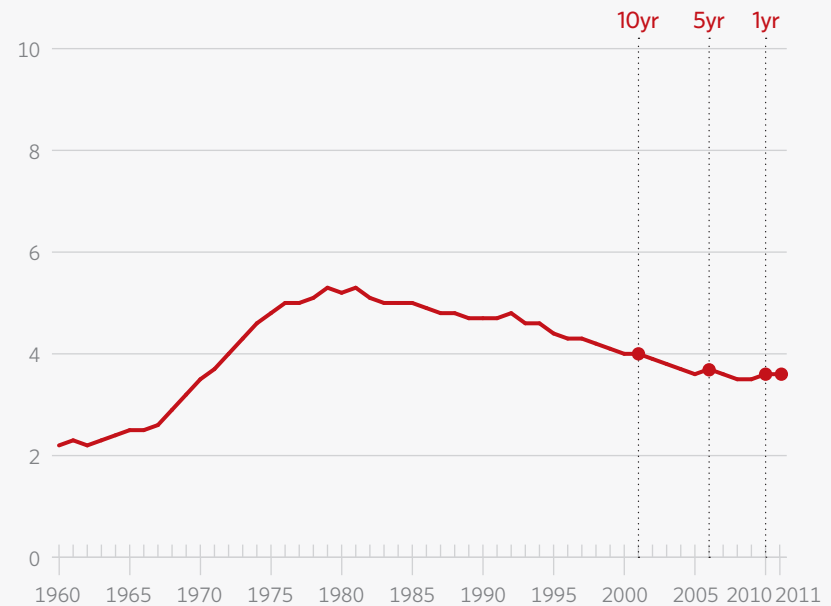
Divorce Rate

From 2001 to 2011, the divorce rate remained relatively stable, decreasing by 0.4 divorces per 1,000 people.

Note: Data in this chart are based on divorces per 1,000 total population, i.e., the crude divorce rate. In 1996, the National Center for Health Statistics began collecting only provisional divorce rate data, based on preliminary counts of divorce certificates from states. See Indicator Sources on p. 80 for further detail.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics.

NUMBER OF DIVORCES PER 1,000 TOTAL POPULATION



As Marriage Goes, So Goes the American Dream

W. Bradford Wilcox

A half-century ago, marriage was the cornerstone for adulthood, and the anchor for the bearing and rearing of children. This is no longer the case: The marriage rate has fallen by approximately 50 percent since the 1960s, and the divorce rate about doubled from 1960 to 1980 (it has since decreased). Consequently, stable marriage is less likely to ground and guide the experience of adults—and especially children—in America. Indeed, the nation’s retreat from marriage means that only about half of the nation’s adults are currently married, and that about half of the nation’s children will spend some time outside an intact, married home.

This retreat from marriage is rooted in shifts in public policy (e.g., a tax and transfer system that often penalizes marriage), the economy (e.g., the declining real wages of men without college degrees), and the culture (e.g., an increasingly *laissez-faire* view of family forms).¹ But of what consequence is this retreat? Many academics and commentators contend that the family is just changing, not declining.²

But this Panglossian view of the retreat from marriage neglects three fundamental social facts:

1. **The retreat from marriage disadvantages children, especially children from poor and working-class homes most affected by this retreat, as they move into adulthood.** Children whose parents fail to get, and stay, married to one another are more likely to end up pregnant as teenagers, to run afoul of the law, to flounder in school, and to end up idle as adults, as the work of sociologists Paul Amato and Sara McLanahan makes clear.³ So, if you care about the well-being of children, you should care about marriage.
2. **The retreat from marriage fuels growing social and economic inequalities between highly educated and less-educated Americans.** The research tells us, for instance, that a substantial share of the growth in family eco-

omic inequality since the 1970s can be attributed to the fact that less-educated Americans are less likely to get and stay married.⁴ So, if you are worried about growing inequality in America, you should care about marriage.

3. **The retreat from marriage is a drag on the American Dream.** Many social drivers of opportunity—high school and college graduation rates, for instance—have improved over the past half-century. But we have seen no overall increase in economic mobility in America. What gives? Part of the story here, it would seem, is that declines in marriage and family stability have offset the improvements the nation has witnessed in other drivers of opportunity. A recent study from Harvard economist Raj Chetty and his colleagues, for instance, indicates that when it comes to the mobility of poor children in communities across the nation, “the strongest and most robust predictor is the fraction of children with single parents.”⁵ Unfortunately, this is one driver of immobility that has increased over the past half-century. So, if you care about renewing the American Dream, you should care about marriage.

Rebuilding a marriage culture should not be a matter of nostalgia for a bygone era. If policymakers and Americans generally are concerned about boosting the welfare of children, bridging this nation’s social and economic divides, and renewing the American Dream, they should think long and hard about public policies that would increase the odds that ordinary Americans recognize marriage as a key to their—and their country’s—future.

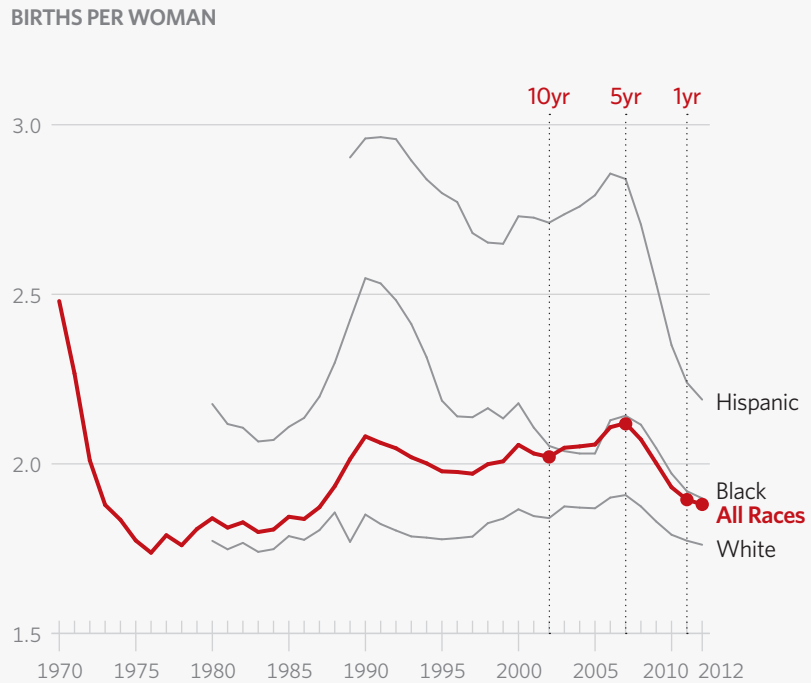
—W. Bradford Wilcox is Director of the National Marriage Project and a Senior Fellow at the Institute for Family Studies.

CHANGES 10-year ▼ 0.14 5-year ▼ 0.24 1-year ▼ 0.01

Total Fertility Rate

From 2002 to 2012, the total fertility rate declined by 0.14 births per woman.

Notes: The total fertility rate is the average expected number of children a woman would have during her childbearing years. Since 1989, Hispanics have been categorized separately from whites and blacks.
Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics Report.



Childbearing: Wanting More, Expecting Less

Jonathan V. Last

When we talk about the “total fertility rate,” we mean the average number of children that the average woman would have over the course of her childbearing years. This is not a hard number, but rather a statistic that changes with time—a historical snapshot.

Juxtaposing these snapshots, however, reveals a clear and unsettling development: For the past 10 years, America’s fertility rate has been trending downward. This is of intense interest because the fertility rate shapes the nation’s age profile, impacts the economy, puts entitlement programs at risk, and even influences foreign policy.

The U.S. total fertility rate first dipped beneath the replacement rate of 2.1—that is, the rate at which, absent immigration, the population remains constant—in 1972. Between then and 2012, it has reached replacement level only twice, in 2006 (when it was 2.11) and 2007 (2.12). In every other year, this rate has been sub-replacement.

Excepting those two blips, over the past 10 years, fertility in America has entered a marked decline, reaching a low of 1.88 in 2012.

The reasons for this decline are manifold, with factors ranging from culture to economics. For instance, fertility dropped steeply after 2007 as recession gripped the country and unemployment soared: Young adults and people in their prime childbearing years decided to postpone childbearing until their economic prospects improved.

The biggest contributor to this overall decline, however, is the plunge in Hispanic American fertility. Over the last 10 years (2002–2012), the fertility rates for white and black Americans have dropped by 4.3 percent and 7.5 percent, respectively. Hispanic Americans, on the other hand, have seen their fertility rate plummet by 19.2 percent.

The important question about Hispanic fertility is: Will the fertility pattern of recent immigrants continue tumbling toward the national average?

There is good reason to believe that it will. Indeed, the family structure of America’s Hispanic population is already in decline, suffering from higher rates of divorce and out-of-wedlock births, as well as a delay in age of first marriage. Should this weaken-

ing of the Hispanic American family continue, overall U.S. fertility rates would fall even further, until, within the next 10 years, they eventually mirror Europe's low rates.

Such low fertility rates are problematic for two primary reasons. First, Europe's low fertility rates have persisted for two generations and, as a result, the welfare state is now unsustainable. As a population continues to age, younger workers are needed to replace, and, through the welfare state, support, older retirees. However, low fertility rates have left Europe without enough younger workers, and a rapidly aging population.

Second, there is the danger that the culture's fertility ideals will be fundamentally altered as fertility drops. In America, a high ideal fertility rate remains the cultural norm: People still want children, even if they do not have them—which means that it is still possible to find a way back to the replacement level. But once a society's idealized fertility rate slips below replacement—as it has done in several European countries—decline is inevitable.

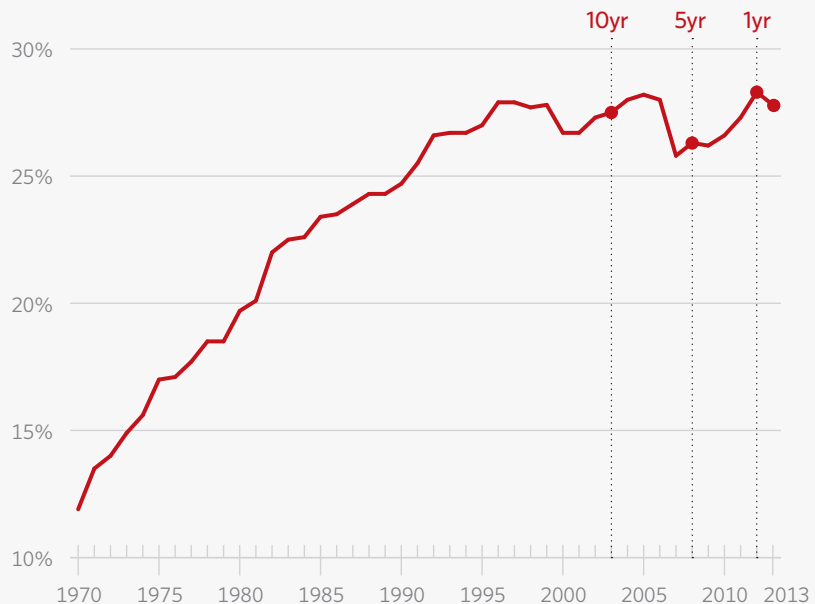
—*Jonathan V. Last is a senior writer at The Weekly Standard and author of What to Expect When No One's Expecting: America's Coming Demographic Disaster.*

CHANGES 10-year ▲ 0.3 5-year ▲ 1.5 1-year ▼ 0.6

Single-Parent Households

From 2003 to 2013, the percentage of children living in single-parent households increased by 0.3 percentage point.

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN LIVING IN SINGLE-PARENT HOUSEHOLDS



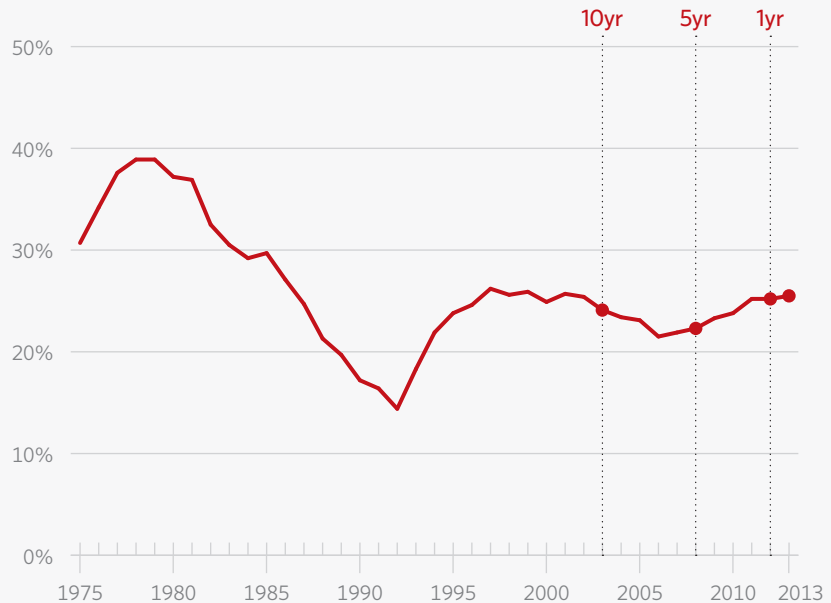
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey.

CHANGES 10-year ▲ 1.4 5-year ▲ 3.2 1-year ▲ 0.3

Teen Drug Use

From 2003 to 2013, the percentage of 12th graders reporting current drug use increased by 1.4 percentage points.

PERCENTAGE OF 12TH GRADERS WHO USED ILLICIT DRUGS* IN PAST MONTH



* Illicit drug use refers to the use of marijuana, LSD and other hallucinogens, cocaine and crack cocaine, heroin, or any use of narcotics without a doctor's prescription, including amphetamines, sedatives (barbiturates), or tranquilizers.
Source: Monitoring the Future.

Teen Drug Use: Risks, Norms, and Choices

John P. Walters

Teen drug use has been on the rise since 2007 after a steady decline earlier in the decade. The data used here come from Monitoring the Future (MTF), the oldest continuous survey of illegal drug use. The MTF is funded by the federal government's National Institute on Drug Abuse and performed by the University of Michigan. The survey is conducted in schools using a random sample of students in 8th, 10th, and 12th grades, with this indicator showing the self-reported behavior of 12th graders.

Over the 10-year period prior to 2013, the MTF results display two distinct trends: From 2002–2003 until 2007–2008, the survey shows a steady decline in use. Then, from 2007–2008 until 2013, the rate of drug use increased. What, if anything, does this signify?

Evidence suggests that youth drug use is inverse-related to perceptions of risk in use and normative expectations of the unacceptability of use in the wider society.¹ When both such perceptions and expectations decline, use will rise and vice versa.

The period of declining teen drug use coincided with national policies that effectively conveyed

two key messages: (1) There are tremendous risks to using illegal drugs, and (2) society views such usage as unacceptable. However, coincident with new national policies introduced by a new Administration, these messages changed. It is hard not to see changing national policy in relation to teen drug use; clearly, national leadership matters. This observation is supported by a wide variety of other drug-use indicators.²

Broader developments in society (legalization movements, popular cultural depictions, political leadership) seem to have contributed to a recent cultural shift in attitudes more favorable toward drug use. Researchers have found a strong predictor of future drug use by measuring young people's perceptions of risk in using drugs and their sense of the norms of social disapproval regarding drug use.³ Both of these measures have declined steeply in recent years. Judgments of "great risk" from regular marijuana use fell from about 80 percent of high school seniors in 1991 to about 40 percent in 2013, while for 10th graders, disapproval of

marijuana use fell from about 75 percent to roughly 53 percent over the same years.⁴

These attitudes are likely affected by the normalization of use and ready availability of “medical” marijuana and should accelerate with legalization. Already, since 2008 when these attitudes changed most steeply, we have seen a 30 percent increase in marijuana use among 10th graders, according to school surveys.⁵

This shift occurred at the same time that the use of substances such as tobacco that are subject to constant cultural pressure continued to decrease. The cultural trends encouraging drug use could undermine America’s future prosperity, as teen drug use can limit opportunities later in life, such as in employment, military service, or academic success.

Not only will positive drug tests or a pattern of drug criminality limit a young person’s opportunity for meaningful employment or the military, but

drug use (particularly of marijuana, by far the most widespread drug) by young people undermines their development as citizens. Low academic performance and increased delinquency are associated with marijuana use, as is increased likelihood of crime. Psychologically, use has been positively associated with cognitive deficits, loss of memory acuity, decreased motivation, driving skills, and impulsive judgment, along with serious psychological distress, including emotional disruption, depression, suicidal ideation, and psychotic episodes.⁶

The greater the exposure to drugs, the greater the association and the deeper the damage. These are not the traits associated with success in life or strength as a nation.

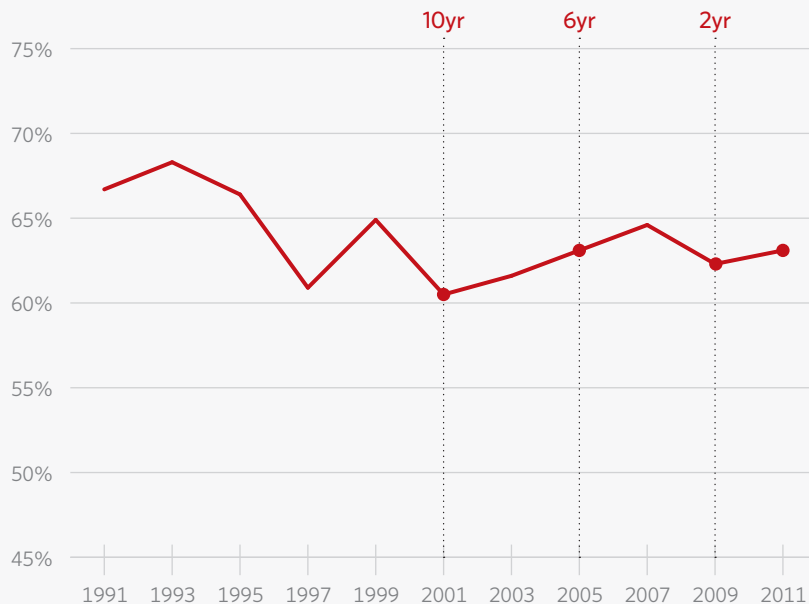
—*John P. Walters is Chief Operating Officer at the Hudson Institute and former Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy.*

CHANGES 10-year ▲ 2.6 6-year No change 2-year ▲ 0.8

Abstinence Among High Schoolers

From 2001 to 2011, the percentage of 12th grade students who had ever had sex increased by 2.6 percentage points.

PERCENTAGE OF 12TH GRADE STUDENTS WHO EVER HAD SEX



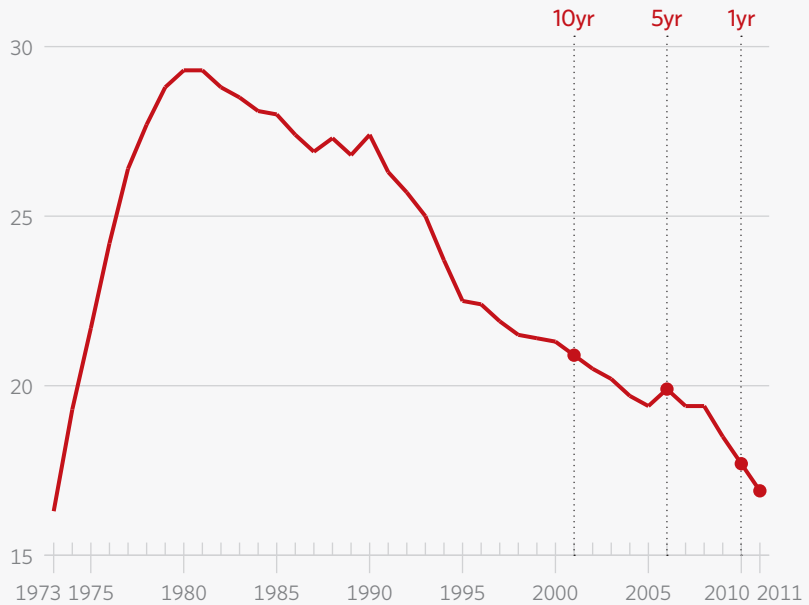
Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

CHANGES 10-year ▼ 4.0 5-year ▼ 3.0 1-year ▼ 0.8

Abortion Rate

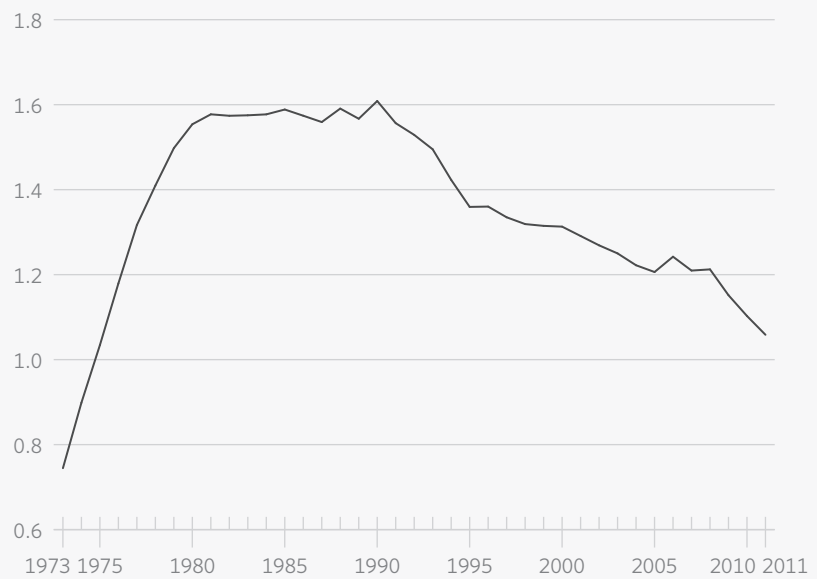
From 2001 to 2011, the abortion rate declined by 4 abortions per 1,000 women ages 15-44.

ABORTIONS PER 1,000 WOMEN AGES 15-44



Total Abortions

TOTAL NUMBER OF ABORTIONS, IN MILLIONS



Source: Alan Guttmacher Institute.

Turning the Abortion Rate Back Toward Life

Charles A. Donovan

Over the most recent decade for which data are available (2001–2011), the overall U.S. abortion rate, calculated as the annual number of abortions per 1,000 women of childbearing age (15 to 44), has dropped, continuing a trend that first appeared in 1980. The decline has been steeper since 1990, with a brief plateau in the middle of the past decade. The 2011 rate for the nation is the lowest since 1973.

Discussions of U.S. abortion trends must always be accompanied by caveats. The United States has an incomplete national abortion reporting system and what is published by government agencies is subject to wide variation regarding both content and time frames. The most comprehensive report, from the Guttmacher Institute, is not issued each year; is voluntary, like the national surveillance reports issued annually by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control; and is subject to omissions that, the authors acknowledge, make estimates necessary. Several U.S. jurisdictions with particularly permissive abortion laws, including California, Maryland, and New Hampshire, gather little or no official information.

Nonetheless, the overall direction of U.S. abortion practice is clear. A closer look at individual states that have consistent data confirms this trend. Between 2001 and 2011, the U.S. abortion rate, based on Guttmacher Institute data, declined by 19.1 percent from 20.9 abortions per 1,000 women ages 15 to 44, to 16.9 per 1,000, the lowest rate since 1973 when it was 16.3. Of the jurisdictions (including the District of Columbia) whose abortion facilities reported data to Guttmacher between 1999 and 2011, a total of 45 reported reductions in their abortion rates, while only five states—Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia—reported increas-

es. Overall, 33 states have abortion rates below the national average; 11 are consistently above the national norm, including California and New York.

Explanations for the long-term decline in U.S. abortions involve both impressionistic and medico-legal factors, each of which may be making a contribution. Michael New (2014)¹ has shown that abortion laws like parental notification, Medicaid funding restrictions, and properly designed informed consent all reduce the incidence of abortion. At the same time, the Guttmacher Institute notes a recent increase in the use of long-lasting or fixed forms of family planning (e.g., intrauterine devices and injectables that have lower failure rates than alternative methods that are more subject to user error).

Perhaps more importantly, six of the 10 most recent Gallup polls (between May 2009 and May 2014) that examine the question have demonstrated that a majority of respondents self-identify as pro-life. That increase may be both cause and effect of parental decisions to respond to unexpected pregnancies by carrying the child to term. James Taranto of *The Wall Street Journal* has described this as the “Roe Effect”—the shift in the belief characteristics of a population where birth rates, while declining overall, show strong divergence between parents indisposed to abortion and parents for whom it is an acceptable response.

Nonetheless, the U.S. abortion rate continues to rank near the highest quartile among Western nations. Our laws are among the globe’s most permissive, and the continuation of a positive three-decade trend cannot be presumed.

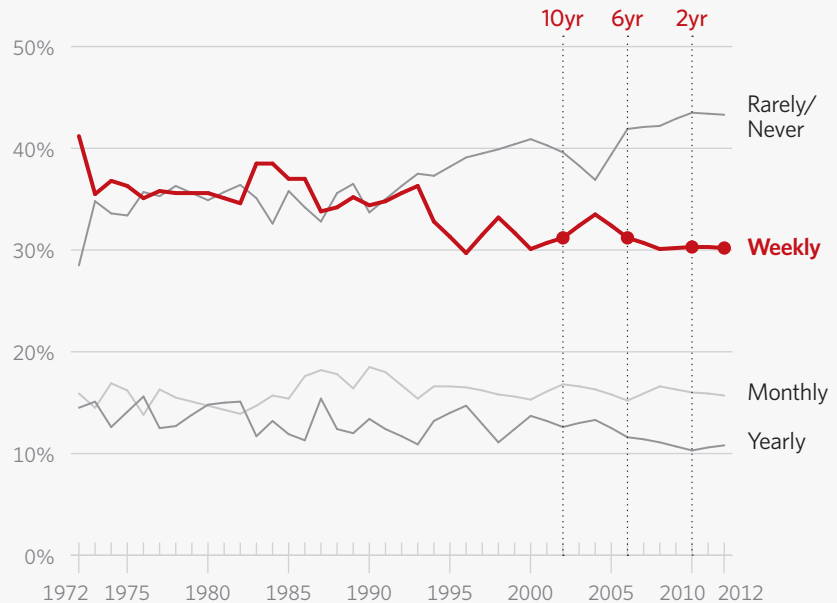
—*Charles A. “Chuck” Donovan is President of the Charlotte Lozier Institute.*

CHANGES 10-year ▼1.0 6-year ▼1.0 2-year ▼0.1

Religious Attendance

From 2002 to 2012, the percentage of Americans attending religious services weekly declined by 1.0 percentage point.

PERCENTAGE ATTENDING RELIGIOUS SERVICES



Source: General Social Survey.

Dispelling Rumors of Religion’s Demise

Byron R. Johnson

In order to understand social trends, collecting data on indicators like religious attendance is an important undertaking. Media accounts suggest a consistent if not dramatic decline of the faith factor in America: that young people under 30 are deserting the church;¹ that women are rapidly falling away from religion; that millennials are leaving the faith of their parents; and that the religiously unaffiliated (a.k.a., “nones”) have increased twofold in recent decades.

But upon closer examination of additional data from the General Social Survey (GSS), as well as other data sources, these headlines are revealed as misleading, inaccurate, and biased. The real story is that across 40 years, there have been only small variations in church attendance.

Surveys perennially find that younger people are less likely to attend church, reflecting the fact that many single young adults choose to sleep in on Sunday mornings once they are out on their own. Once they marry, and especially once they have children, their attendance rates recover. However, recent research confirms if people do not marry, and if they

do not have children, there is a real decline in church attendance—a finding that is particularly striking among the poor and less educated. On the other hand, many who do not attend church regularly, especially the elderly, consistently report high levels of religious commitment and belief.

Media reports have also highlighted a supposed significant decline in women’s religious attendance, but this is not accurate.² Nor has the gender gap narrowed. Moreover, the Baylor Religion Survey³ shows that in 2007, 38 percent of women, compared with 26 percent of men, described themselves as “very religious.” This gap, a phenomenon observable for every nation around the globe, continues in America.⁴ In 1991, according to GSS data, 38 percent of women and 28 percent of men said they attended weekly; in 2002, 36 percent of women and 24 percent of men; in 2008, 36 percent of women and 25 percent of men; and in 2010, 34 percent of women and 25 percent of men said they attended weekly.

Millennials, like the vast majority of Americans, consider themselves religious. In fact, in a pluralistic

society like America, where options abound, many people, including millennials, switch churches, and they do so for a variety of reasons. Oftentimes this means they will attend a church from a denomination different from the one in which they were raised. This change does not mean, as many have wrongly concluded, that they have departed the faith. In fact, many go to churches that are more theologically conservative than the ones in which they were raised. Switching churches is a fascinating subject and if anything, a marker of religious vitality, not decline.

The rise of those reporting no religious affiliation (a.k.a., “nones”) on traditional surveys has contributed to other inaccurate perceptions. Most surveys, including the GSS, do not ask respondents enough questions to accurately sort out religious affiliation. In the Baylor Religion Survey, we not only asked the identical affiliation question used by the GSS;

we also asked respondents—including the nones—if they attended religious services. Some of the nones not only indicated they regularly attended, but provided us with the name and address of their church, and a surprising number were nondenominational and evangelical. The knee-jerk reaction that all nones are unaffiliated—or atheists—is false.⁵

Finally, the fact that the number of American atheists has remained steady at 4 percent since 1944, and that church membership has reached an all-time high,⁶ remind us that indicators are helpful in seeing an accurate picture of what is really happening in our society.

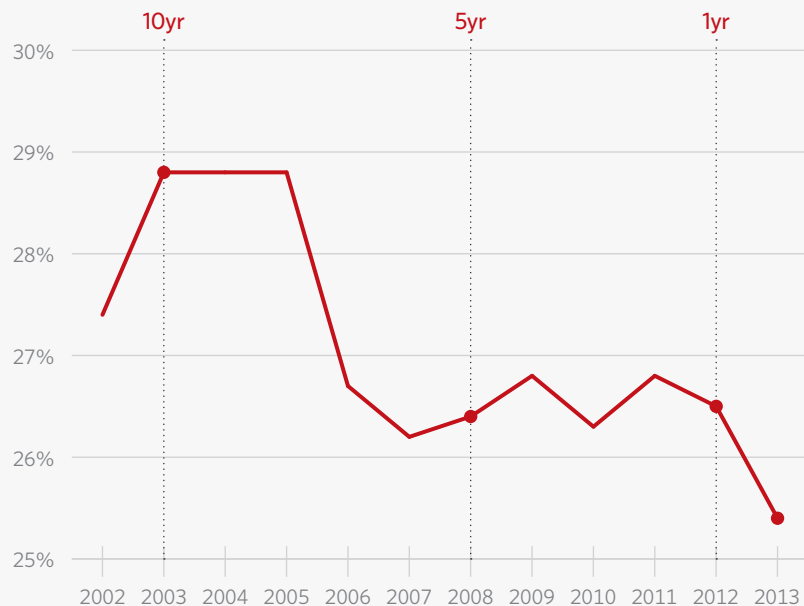
—**Byron R. Johnson** is distinguished professor of the social sciences at Baylor University and founding Director of the Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion (ISR).

CHANGES 10-year ▼ 3.4 5-year ▼ 1.0 1-year ▼ 1.1

Volunteering

From 2003 to 2013, the percentage of adults who volunteered declined by 3.4 percentage points.

PERCENTAGE OF ADULTS VOLUNTEERING



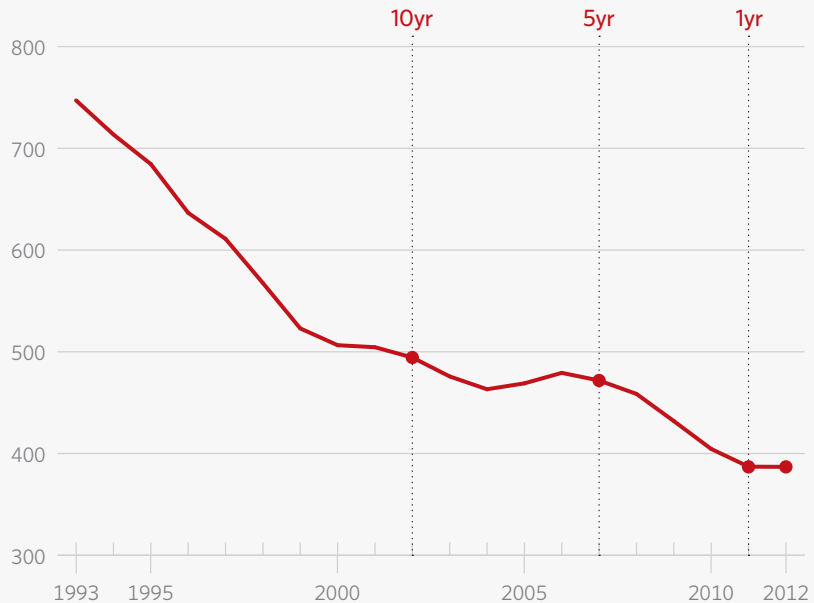
Note: Figures are based on an annual survey of volunteering conducted in the month of September.
Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

CHANGES 10-year ▼ 107.5 5-year ▼ 84.9 1-year ▼ 0.2

Violent Crime Rate

From 2002 to 2012, the violent crime rate declined by 107.5 crimes per 100,000 people.

NUMBER OF VIOLENT CRIMES PER 100,000 PEOPLE



Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The Great Crime Decline

Heather Mac Donald

From 2000 to 2012, the U.S. violent crime rate fell over 23 percent. Such an improvement in the social fabric would be cause enough for celebration. But the crime drop of the 2000s followed an even larger decline in the previous decade: 32 percent from 1993 to 2000. The 1990s crime drop (in both personal and property crime) was so sharp and so unexpected that by 2000, most criminologists were predicting that an uptick was all but inevitable. Instead, after a brief pause, the crime fall again picked up steam, extending the longest and steepest crime decrease since World War Two.

America's two-decades-long victory over crime reversed what had seemed to be an inexorable increase in lawlessness since the 1960s. The murder rate had more than doubled from 1964 to 1974, spiking again in the late 1980s and early 1990s. But just as crime was peaking in 1993, it reversed and went into freefall. The greatest beneficiaries of that crime drop have been the residents of minority neighborhoods, where crime was (and still is) highest and where the bulk of the recent crime decrease occurred.

The fact that the American crime drop encompassed every category of serious violent and property offense makes this transformation virtually unique among Western countries. Particular crimes went down by sometimes comparable amounts in other G7 countries, but those nations experienced increases in other serious offenses. And the fact that crime went down everywhere across America makes the phenomenon particularly puzzling, since crime is a local condition.

Neither liberal nor conservative root-cause theories of law-breaking have fared well over the past two decades. Even though the crime explosion during the booming 1960s should have discredited the liberal belief that economic hardship causes crime, criminologists opined in 2008 that the recession would trigger a crime increase. Instead, the recession accelerated the 2000s crime drop.

Family breakdown also moved in the opposite direction as crime, confounding conservative theories. The black unwed birth rate rose from 66.7 percent in 1990 to 71.6 percent today, and the rate among

whites rose from 16.9 percent in 1990 to 29.3 percent today. Meanwhile, crime, especially that committed by blacks, plummeted.

So what happened? No consensus exists. Favored explanations among criminologists include the collapse of the crack cocaine trade, a shrinking youth population, and a better job market, but none of these theories perfectly fit the data. The spread of New York-style policing and increased incarceration are better, but by no means exclusive, explanations for the national crime drop.

New York's crime decline over the past two decades has been twice as deep as the national average and greater than in every other large American city. The primary reason for New York's stunning decrease in crime is the city's revolution in policing. Inaugurated in 1994, this breakthrough featured rigorous data analysis, strict accountability for local commanders, the enforcement of quality of life offenses, and proactive pedestrian stops intended

to avert crime before it happens. New York's crime conquest attracted attention, and by the second half of the 1990s, other departments were holding commanders accountable for the safety of their precincts and using up-to-the-minute crime information to target their resources at crime hot spots.

The national prison build-up also played a major role. The prisoner population increased 400 percent from 1977 to the present, following a deincarceration movement begun in the 1960s. That incarceration build-up would have reached its maximum incapacitative power in the 1990s, as Franklin Zimring points out in *The Great American Crime Decline*. The effect of the current deincarceration movement on the nation's crime rate remains to be seen.

—*Heather Mac Donald is the Thomas W. Smith Fellow at the Manhattan Institute and the author of Are Cops Racist? How the War Against the Police Harms Black Americans.*

Additional Resources

Marriage Rate

FamilyFacts.org: Marriage & Family

<http://www.familyfacts.org/charts/marriage-and-family>

Divorce Rate

A Marshall Plan for Marriage

<http://www.heritage.org/research/commentary/2011/06/a-marshall-plan-for-marriage-rebuilding-our-shattered-homes?ac=1>

Total Fertility Rate

FamilyFacts.org: Sex & Childbearing

<http://www.familyfacts.org/charts/sex-and-childbearing>

Single-Parent Households

Marriage: America's Greatest Weapon Against Child Poverty

<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2012/09/marriage-americas-greatest-weapon-against-child-poverty>

FamilyFacts.org: Marriage & Family

<http://www.familyfacts.org/charts/marriage-and-family>

Teen Drug Use

FamilyFacts.org: Health

<http://www.familyfacts.org/charts/health>

Abstinence Among High Schoolers

FamilyFacts.org: Sex & Childbearing

<http://www.familyfacts.org/charts/sex-and-childbearing>

The Relationship Between Family Structure and Sexual Activity

<http://www.familyfacts.org/reports/1/the-relationship-between-family-structure-and-sexual-activity>

Abortion Rate

How to Speak Up for Life

<http://shop.heritage.org/how-to-speak-up-for-life9817.html>

Religious Attendance

FamilyFacts.org: Religious Practice

<http://www.familyfacts.org/charts/religious-practice>

Religious Practice and Family Stability

<http://www.familyfacts.org/briefs/33/religious-practice-and-family-stability>

Volunteering

FamilyFacts.org Brief: Religiosity and Charity/Volunteering

<http://www.familyfacts.org/briefs/41/religiosity-and-charity-volunteering>

Violent Crime Rate

FamilyFacts.org: Crime and Violence

<http://www.familyfacts.org/charts/crime-and-violence>

Section Endnotes

Renewing Our Culture

Kathryn Jean Lopez

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3. Marist Poll, "Abortion in America" January 2014, <http://www.kofc.org/un/en/resources/communications/marist-poll-abortion-restrictions2014.pdf> (accessed May 14, 2014).
4. Examples include the work of the Care Net network and the Sisters of Life. See Care Net website, <https://www.care-net.org/> (accessed May 14, 2014), and Sisters of Life website, <http://www.sistersoflife.org/> (accessed May 14, 2014).
5. Hope After Abortion website, <http://hopeafterabortion.com/> (accessed May 14, 2014).
6. Abortion Changes You website, <http://www.abortionchangesyou.com/> (accessed May 14, 2014).

As Marriage Goes, So Goes the American Dream

W. Bradford Wilcox

1. W. Bradford Wilcox, ed., *The State of Our Unions: Marriage in America 2010*, National Marriage Project and Institute for American Values, 2010, <http://stateofourunions.org/2010/SOOU2010.pdf> (accessed May 13, 2014).
2. Judith Stacey, "Good Riddance to 'The Family': A Response to David Popenoe," *Journal of Marriage and Family*, Vol. 55, No. 3 (August 1993), <http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/353335?uid=370313441&uid=2&uid=3&uid=67&uid=25421&uid=62&sid=21104007524497> (accessed May 13, 2014), and Katie Roiphe, "In Defense of Single Motherhood," *The New York Times*, August 11, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/12/opinion/sunday/in-defense-of-single-motherhood.html?pagewanted=all&r=1&> (accessed May 13, 2014).
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5. W. Bradford Wilcox, "Family Matters: What's the Most Important Factor Blocking Social Mobility? Single Parents, Suggests a New Study," *Slate*, January 22, 2014, http://www.slate.com/articles/double_x/doublex/2014/01/new_harvard_study_where_is_the_land_of_opportunity_finds_broken_families.html (accessed May 13, 2014).

Teen Drug Use: Risks, Norms, and Choices

John P. Walters

1. Lloyd D. Johnston, Patrick M. O'Malley, Jerald G. Bachman, John E. Schulenberg, Richard A. Miech, *Monitoring the Future: National Survey Results on Drug Use, 1975–2013: Volume 1, Secondary School Students*, University of Michigan, Institute for Social Research, June 2014, http://www.monitoringthefuture.org/pubs/monographs/mtf-vol1_2013.pdf (accessed June 17, 2014).
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4. Lloyd D. Johnston, Patrick M. O'Malley, Richard A. Miech, Jerald G. Bachman, John E. Schulenberg, *Monitoring the Future: National Survey Results on Drug Use, 1975–2013, Overview, Key Findings on Adolescent Drug Use*, University of Michigan, Institute for Social Research, February 2014, <http://monitoringthefuture.org/pubs/monographs/mtf-overview2013.pdf> (accessed July 9, 2014).
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Turning the Abortion Rate Back Toward Life

Charles A. Donovan

1. Michael J. New, "Analyzing the Effect of U.S. Anti-Abortion Legislation in the Post-Casey Era: A Reassessment," *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* (forthcoming).

Dispelling Rumors of Religion's Demise

Byron R. Johnson

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2. Rodney Stark and Byron R. Johnson, "Religion and the Bad News Bearers," *The Wall Street Journal*, August 26, 2011, <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424053111903480904576510692691734916> (accessed June 17, 2014).
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6. J. Gordon Melton, *Nelson's Guide to Denominations: The Primary Resource for Understanding and Navigating America's Christian Organizations* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2007).

Section Two

Poverty & Dependence

Poverty & Dependence Summary

- From 2003 to 2013, the labor force participation rate for adults ages 25 to 54 fell by 2 percentage points. “U.S. labor force participation began falling gradually in 2000—a decline that accelerated sharply after the onset of the Great Recession,” writes James Sherk (pp. 43–44).
- The unwed birth rate rose 6.7 percentage points between 2002 and 2012. As Ron Haskins explains, “Nonmarital childbearing is one of the preeminent reasons this nation, despite spending about \$1 trillion a year on programs for disadvantaged families, is struggling to reduce poverty and increase economic mobility” (pp. 45–46).
- From 2002 to 2012, self-sufficiency—the ability of a family to sustain an income above the poverty threshold without welfare assistance—declined as the percentage of individuals living in poverty increased by 2.9 percentage points (pp. 47–48).
- The work participation rate for recipients of cash welfare declined by 5 percentage points from 2000 to 2010. As Robert Doar points out, it has not risen above 30 percent since 2006: “Restoring the original purpose of welfare reform requires reinvigorating the work participation rate” (pp. 50–51).

Poverty & Dependence Indicators

	RIGHT TRACK	WRONG TRACK
Labor Force Participation (p. 43)		○
Unwed Birth Rate (p. 45)		○
Self-Sufficiency (p. 47)		○
Total Welfare Spending (p. 48)		○
Subsidized Housing Participation (p. 49)		○
Food Stamp Participation (p. 49)		○
TANF Participation (p. 50)	●	
TANF Work Participation Rate (p. 50)		○

Opting Out of the Burdens of Freedom

Lawrence M. Mead

America's greatest strength is its civil society. And central to this civil society is family and the capacity to provide for one's own through work. Traditionally, Americans have worked hard to advance themselves and their families—an effort that, in turn, produces this country's extraordinary wealth. But an important part of America seems to be opting out of this strenuous, yet rewarding, life.

For the most part, serious poverty occurs in America when employment and family break down. Most of the poor are of working age, yet barely a third of the adult poor reported any earnings in 2012, compared to nearly two-thirds for the population as a whole. Female-headed families, where the parents fail to marry or to stay married, are at high risk of poverty—40.9 percent of such families with children were poor in 2012, compared to only 8.9 percent for two-parent families.¹ Government supplies these families with various benefits, but nothing can fully compensate for the lack of parents who are committed to each other and to working.

The proportion of non-working and single-mother households has increased considerably in recent decades. In 1959, 68 percent of the heads of poor families worked; in 2012 only 45 percent worked. In the 1960s, less than 10 percent of American children were born outside marriage, but by 2012, 41 percent were, with especially high rates for Hispanics (54 percent) and blacks (72 percent). Government and private charities struggle to forestall poverty, but they face a constant undertow from a weakening of the culture of work and family life.

America used to have unusually high labor force participation, with two-thirds of adults working or seeking work. But since 2000, that figure has plummeted and is now below that of several European countries.² Legions of low-skilled men are giving up on work, either by retiring or claiming support from our swollen disability programs.

Non-work and non-marriage are also connected. Failure to work regularly is a central reason why many low-skilled men today become absent fathers; their spouses often evict them from the home because they do not provide. So non-work promotes the breakup or non-formation of families. The converse is also true: when children grow up in fatherless families, they are less well prepared to work and marry than children from two-parent families. So non-marriage contributes to non-work, crime, and other problems that persist in the next generation.

Trends are much worse at the bottom of society than the top. Upper-income Americans typically work many more hours than the poor, the reverse of a century ago. The college-educated also tend to marry and stay married, even as marriage is failing at the other end of society. The contrast in lifestyle between the affluent and the poor is now as stark as their difference in income. Marriage, not money, now marks the chief dividing line between classes in America.

Together, irregular employment and family relations complicate the lives of lower-income Americans. These adults typically work erratically, moving in and out of jobs and the labor force. Spouses often change partners, forcing children to adjust to

a succession of fathers or other caregivers. The turmoil detracts from the energy and productivity of the society.³

Liberal analysts stress structural causes. In the short term, they say, the financial crisis threw millions out of work, and these individuals are only now finding new jobs. The advent of Obamacare, which allows many more people to obtain health coverage outside employment, will cause another 2.5 million to leave the labor force.⁴ Liberals also blame the long-term trends on globalization, especially the loss of well-paid factory jobs when manufacturing moved overseas. Supposedly, low-skilled men cannot find work or, if they can, the jobs are too low-paying to motivate employment. This, in turn, explains why fewer and fewer men are now taking on the burdens of steady work and marriage.

But plenty of low-paid jobs still exist. Most of the jobless poor say they can find work, and the continuing presence of 11 million illegal aliens in the country demonstrates as much. Low wages are not an impediment to work, since wage subsidies and other benefits can make those jobs livable. And if low wages prevent marriage, why are poor adults still having children outside marriage? By doing so, they incur most of the burdens of marriage, such as child support obligations, without its benefits. Unwed pregnancy is not sensible for either parents or children, and it never has been. With or without good jobs, the best solution to family is the traditional one—for parents to avoid pregnancy until marriage, and for marriages to last.

Some suggest that poverty is related to rising inequality in earnings, with the rich making relatively more and the low-income less, than they used to do. If most poor adults were working and struggling to survive on declining wages, such a scenario might be plausible. But earnings inequality has little to do with either poverty or welfare.

In the past, conservatives have blamed these trends on an indulgent government. Social programs like welfare that support the non-working and fatherless families can appear to produce more of them. But these effects are insufficient to explain

the gulf in work and family behavior that now divides the classes. A better theory is that welfare, until recently, was permissive—giving aid without demanding good behavior in return. In the 1990s, welfare reform stiffened requirements that welfare mothers work in return for aid. This reform, combined with a good economy, drove most of these mothers off the rolls, mostly into jobs. The earnings gains halted the rise of inequality, but it resumed when some of the work gains were lost in the 2000s.

Most likely, the decay of work and family is due primarily to the decline of America's bracing culture of individual responsibility—not the opportunity structure. Ordinary people, even if low-skilled, once seized their chances to get ahead more consistently than many appear to do today. A hard-working lifestyle is strenuous. The burdens of freedom can be heavy. But living such a challenging life enables ordinary people to achieve their own goals, rather than be governed by their environment.

In light of welfare reform, the best hope to reaffirm a culture of achievement is to combine “help and hassle”: Assist the needy but also demand that they do more to help themselves. Recent education and training programs are increasingly telling their clients that they must meet accepted standards and go to work in available jobs. The criminal justice system has begun developing mandatory work programs to which parolees can be assigned if they do not work. And the child support system also has work programs for men who fail to pay their child support.

As a result of these innovative new approaches, there is new hope that the decline in employment of low-skilled Americans can be reversed. By promoting work where possible, we can promote the self-reliant qualities needed to make marriage and family possible. Stronger workers can be stronger parents, able to prepare the next generation to flourish in a free society.

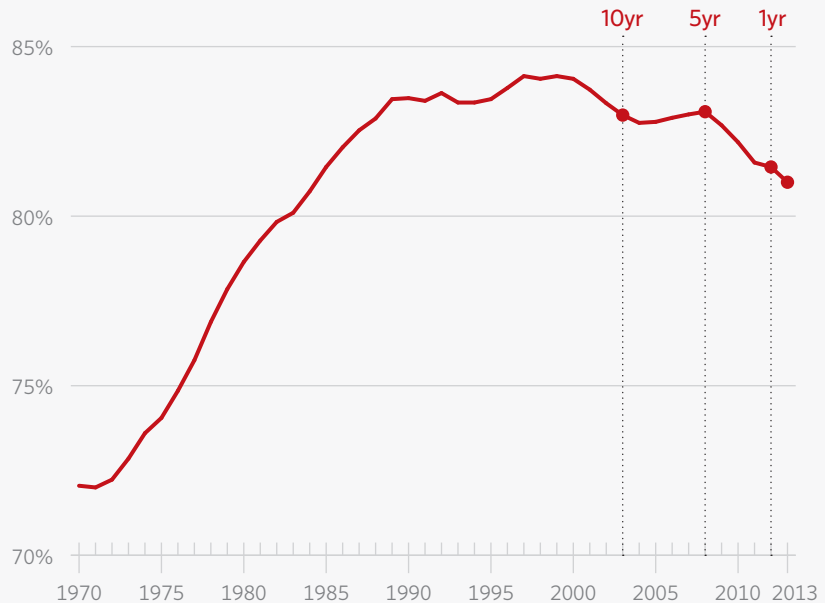
—*Lawrence M. Mead is Professor of Politics and Public Policy at New York University. He is the author of several books about poverty and welfare reform.*

CHANGES 10-year ▼ 2.0 5-year ▼ 2.1 1-year ▼ 0.5

Labor Force Participation Rate

From 2003 to 2013, the labor force participation rate for adults ages 25 to 54 fell by 2 percentage points.

PERCENTAGE OF ADULTS AGES 25-54 WORKING OR SEARCHING FOR WORK



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, and U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Not Looking for Work: Labor Force Participation and Opportunity

James Sherk

The labor force participation (LFP) rate is defined as the proportion of adults with a job or who are actively seeking one. A higher labor force participation rate among those capable of working indicates a greater willingness to work or a greater availability of work opportunities. Many factors affect the LFP rate:

- Age.** Older Americans are less likely than prime age workers (ages 25 to 54) to participate in the workforce and much more likely to leave the labor force for retirement.
- Economic conditions.** The LFP rate does not necessarily measure the health of the economy, since adults stop working for many reasons. However, labor force participation often decreases during a down economy as some workers give up on finding employment.
- Disability benefits.** Enrollment in Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) has steadily increased since Congress relaxed eligibility in the mid-1980s. Application rates further spike during recessions. Six percent of the adult population—and over a tenth of those without a high school education—now collect SSDI instead of working.
- Government assistance.** Means-tested government welfare programs that are not properly designed can discourage work by enabling individuals to depend on government rather than seeking self-sufficiency by participating in the labor force. This applies to individuals further up the income scale as well. University of Chicago economist Casey Mulligan has found that between taxes and the loss of Obamacare exchange subsidies the median household in 2015 will keep only half of each additional dollar they earn. Government programs can discourage labor force participation and reduce work-effort by Americans well above the poverty level.

- **School enrollment.** Since 2007, the proportion of Americans enrolled in school and outside the labor force has increased sharply. In part this increase reflects the difficulty many students have had in finding part-time jobs. But the weak labor market has also caused more Americans to stick with their studies in the hope of getting a better job when they graduate.

It is important to focus on measures of labor force participation that reflect changes in opportunity and dependence. Breaking down the rate by educational attainment shows more educated Americans remain far more strongly attached to the labor market than less educated Americans. Americans ages 25 to 54 are most likely to be working and least likely to be enrolled in school or retired, resulting in a much higher LFP than the overall rate.

U.S. labor force participation began falling gradually in 2000—a decline that accelerated sharply

after the onset of the Great Recession. Demographic changes accounted for most of the drop before the recession, but only for about a quarter of the decline afterward; increased enrollment in SSDI and school account for most of the remaining post-recession LFP drop. While many of those enrolled in school will re-enter the labor market, very few who begin collecting disability benefits ever return to work. Increased SSDI enrollments probably represent a permanent increase in dependence on the government. Obamacare will further reduce the reward for working: The Congressional Budget Office estimates this new law will cause 2.5 million workers to exit the labor force.

—*James Sherk is Senior Policy Analyst in Labor Economics in the Center for Data Analysis, of the Institute for Economic Freedom and Opportunity, at The Heritage Foundation.*

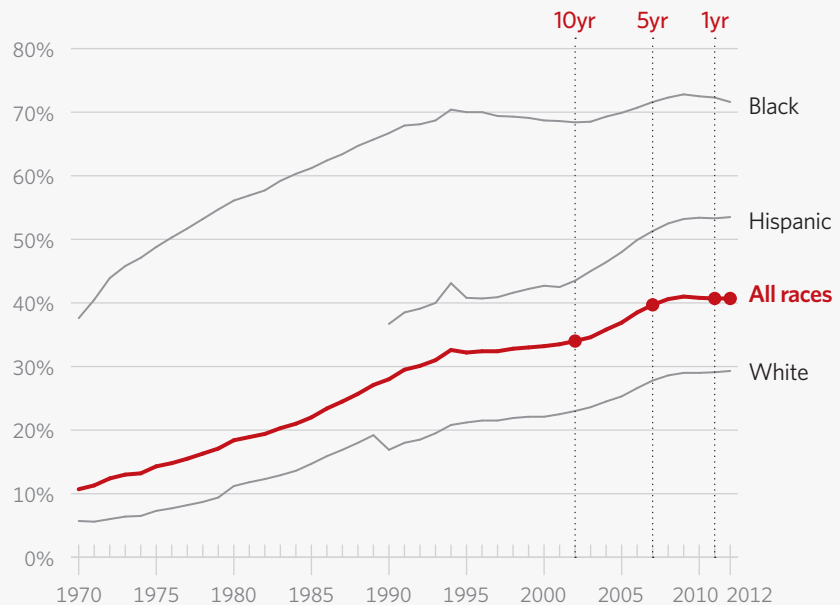
CHANGES 10-year ▲ 6.7 5-year ▲ 1.0 1-year No change

Unwed Birth Rate

From 2002 to 2012, the percentage of children born outside of marriage has grown by 6.7 percentage points.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, and Child Trends.

PERCENTAGE OF BIRTHS TO UNMARRIED WOMEN AGES 15 AND OLDER, BY RACE



The Crisis of Nonmarital Childbearing

Ron Haskins

Nonmarital childbearing is one of the preeminent reasons this nation, despite spending about \$1 trillion a year on programs for disadvantaged families, is struggling to reduce poverty and increase economic mobility.

Most children born outside marriage grow up in a female-headed family. Consequently, these families face two distinct disadvantages. First, the poverty rate among children in female-headed families is at least four times as great as the poverty rate among children in married-couple families. Second, there is a vast and growing body of research demonstrating that a family composed of a married husband and wife is the ideal environment in which to raise a child.

Controlling for other differences, children in female-headed families are more likely on average to enter school behind their peers in math, reading readiness, and socio-emotional skills—a gap our schools are often unable to close. As a result, these students are less likely to graduate from high school and less likely to enter, and graduate from, college.¹

Children from female-headed families are also more likely on average to be arrested and more likely on average to become unmarried parents in their teen years or in their twenties or thirties, thereby creating a cyclical effect that pushes nonmarital birth rates ever higher. And all of these factors contribute to a higher probability that, as adults, these children will live in poverty while struggling to ascend America's economic ladder.²

Given these facts, it seems likely that the nation's young people would try to avoid having babies until they are older, employed, and married. But analyzing trends across the five decennial censuses since 1970 shows that the marriage rate is falling, while nonmarital childbearing rates continue to rise. Between 1970 and 2010, marriage rates for whites, blacks, and Hispanics all fell by over 20 percent; is it any surprise then that over 40 percent of American babies are now born outside marriage?

The rising nonmarital birth rate creates poverty and destroys economic opportunity—for both current and future generations. For the past four

decades, marriage rates have been declining, triggering an explosion in the nonmarital birth rate. Unless these trends are reversed, this nation will continue to have limited success in reducing poverty and promoting opportunity.

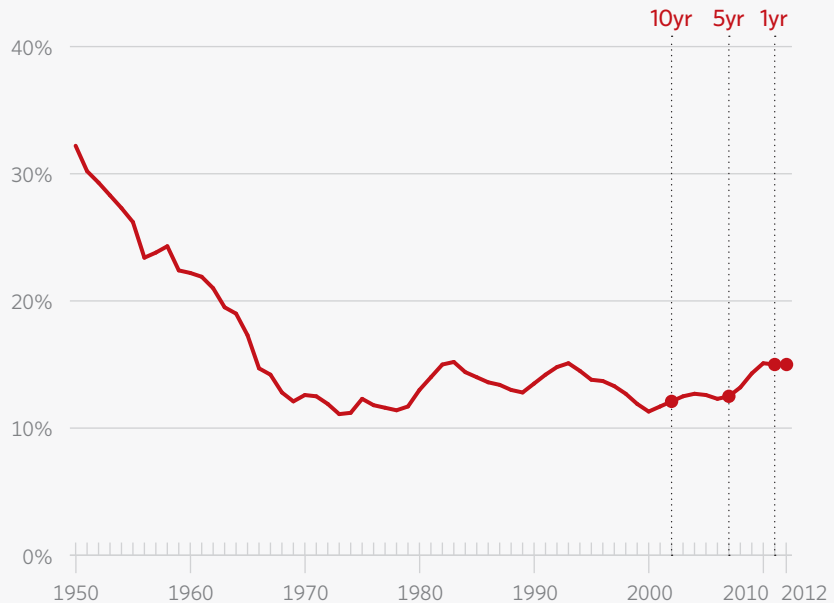
—*Ron Haskins is a Senior Fellow and co-Director of the Center on Children and Families at the Brookings Institution and former Senior Advisor to the President for Welfare Policy.*

CHANGES 10-year ▲ 2.9 5-year ▲ 2.5 1-year No change

Self-Sufficiency

From 2002 to 2012, the percentage of individuals living in poverty (excluding welfare benefits) increased by 2.9 percentage points.

PERCENTAGE OF INDIVIDUALS WHO LIVE IN POVERTY
(EXCLUDING WELFARE BENEFITS)



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Self-Sufficiency Rate Stagnates, Welfare State Grows

Robert Rector

For the past 50 years, the government's annual poverty rate has hardly changed at all. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 15 percent of Americans still live in poverty, roughly the same rate as the mid-1960s when the War on Poverty was just starting. After adjusting for inflation, federal and state welfare spending today is 16 times greater than it was when President Johnson launched the War on Poverty. If converted into cash, current means-tested spending is five times the amount needed to eliminate all official poverty in the U.S. How can the government spend so much while poverty remains unchanged?

The answer is simple: The U.S. Bureau of the Census official "poverty" figures are woefully incomplete. The Census defines a family as poor if its annual "income" falls below specific poverty income thresholds. In counting "income," the Census includes wages and salaries but excludes nearly all welfare benefits. The federal government runs over 80 means-tested welfare programs that provide cash, food, housing, medical care, and targeted social services to poor and low-income Americans. Government spent \$916 bil-

lion on these programs in 2012; roughly 100 million Americans received aid from at least one of them, at an average cost of \$9,000 per recipient. (These figures do not include Social Security or Medicare.)

Of the \$916 billion in means-tested welfare spending in 2012, the Census counted only about 3 percent as "income" for purposes of measuring poverty. In other words, the government's official "poverty" measure is not helpful for measuring actual living conditions.

On the other hand, the Census poverty numbers do provide a very useful measure of "self-sufficiency": the ability of a family to sustain an income above the poverty threshold without welfare assistance. The Census is accurate in reporting there has been no improvement in self-sufficiency for the past 45 years.

Ironically, self-sufficiency was President Johnson's original goal in launching his War on Poverty. Johnson promised his war would remove the "causes not just the consequences of poverty." He stated, "Our aim is not only to relieve the symptom

of poverty, but to cure it and, above all, to prevent it.” Johnson did not intend to put more Americans on the dole. Instead, he explicitly sought to reduce the future need for welfare by making lower-income Americans productive and self-sufficient.

By this standard, the War on Poverty has been a catastrophic failure. After spending more than \$20 trillion on Johnson’s war, many Americans are less capable of self-support than when the war began. This lack of progress is, in a major part, due to the welfare system itself. Welfare breaks down the habits and norms that lead to self-reliance, especially those of marriage and work. It thereby generates a pattern of increasing inter-generational depen-

dence. The welfare state is self-perpetuating: By undermining productive social norms, welfare creates a need for even greater assistance in the future. Reforms should focus on these programs’ incentive structure to point the way toward self-sufficiency. One step is communicating that the poverty rate is better understood as self-sufficiency rate—that is, we should measure how many Americans can take care of themselves and their families.

—**Robert Rector** is Senior Research Fellow in the Domestic Policy Studies Department, of the Institute for Family, Community, and Opportunity, at The Heritage Foundation.

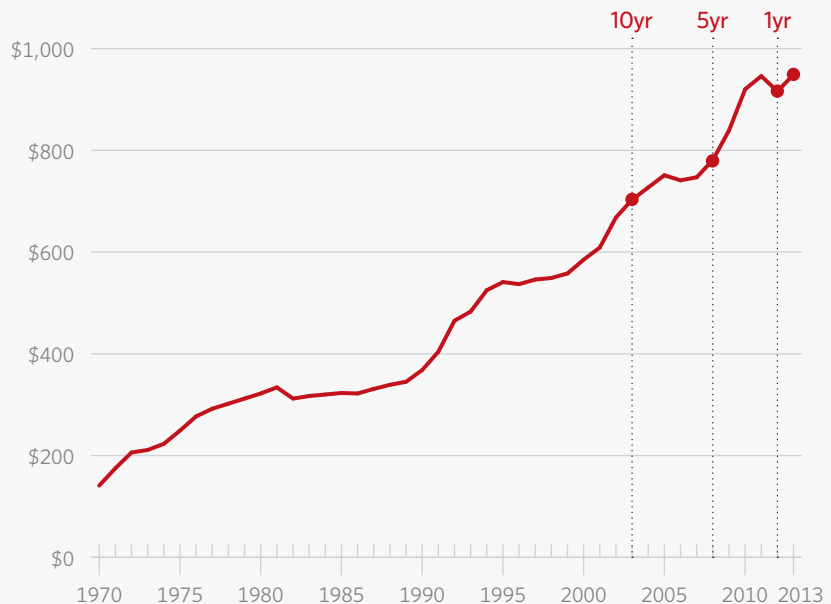
CHANGES 10-year ▲ 246 5-year ▲ 168 1-year ▲ 33

Total Welfare Spending

From 2003 to 2013, the combined cost of federal and state welfare spending increased by \$246 billion, in 2012 dollars.

Note: Total means-tested welfare spending includes over 80 government programs providing cash, food, housing, medical care, and targeted social services for poor and low-income Americans. Social Security, Medicare, unemployment insurance, and veterans’ benefits are not included in the total.
Sources: Heritage Foundation research and data from the Office of Management and Budget.

FEDERAL AND STATE WELFARE SPENDING IN BILLIONS OF 2012 DOLLARS

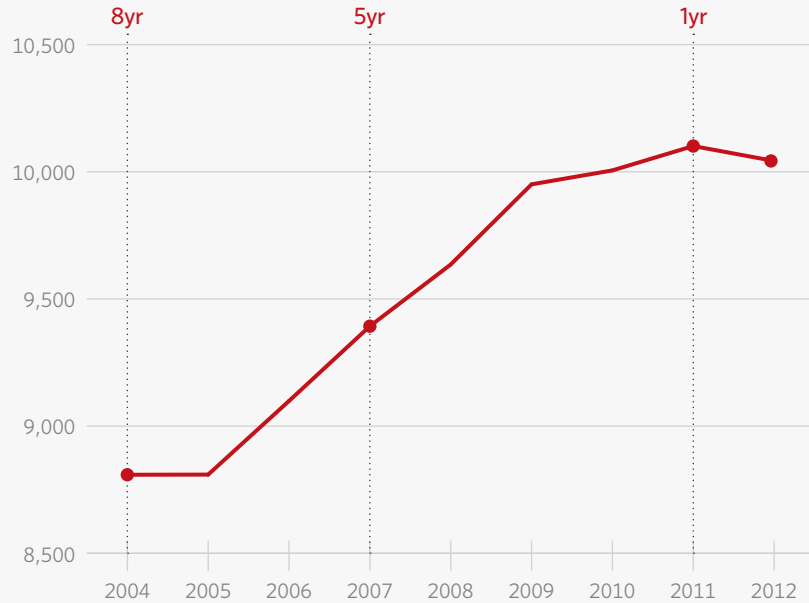


CHANGES **8-year ▲ 1,234** 5-year ▲ 650 1-year ▼ 59

Subsidized Housing Participation

From 2004 to 2012, the number of people living in government-subsidized housing increased by about 1.23 million.

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS LIVING IN SUBSIDIZED HOUSING, IN THOUSANDS



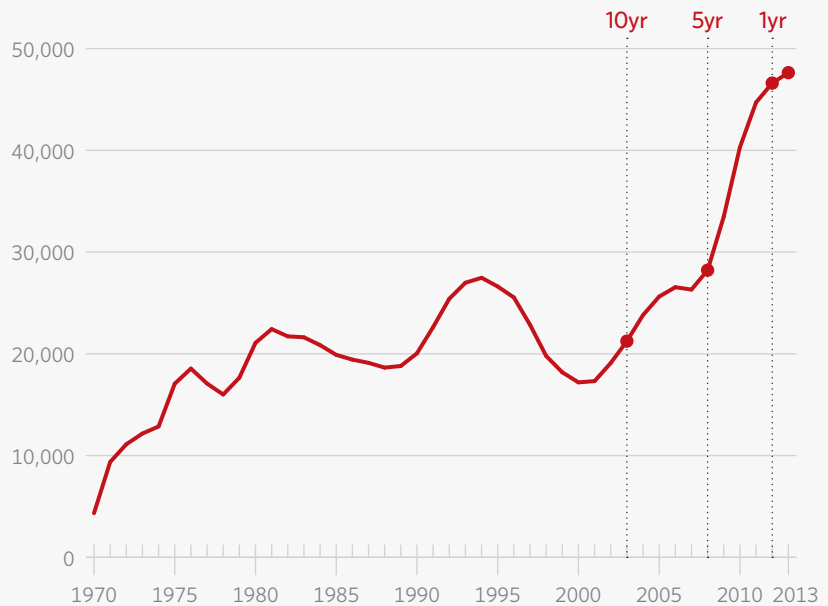
Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

CHANGES **10-year ▲ 26,386** 5-year ▲ 19,413 1-year ▲ 1,027

Food Stamp Participation

From 2003 to 2013, food stamp participation grew by about 26.39 million people.

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS RECEIVING FOOD STAMPS, IN THOUSANDS



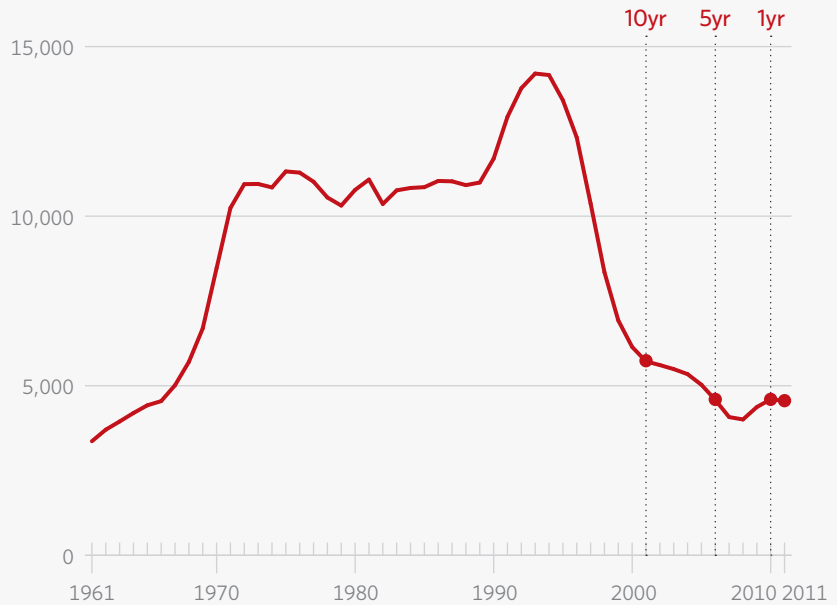
Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service.

CHANGES 10-year ▼ 1,158 5-year ▼ 23 1-year ▼ 39

TANF Participation

From 2001 to 2011, the number of individuals receiving aid from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program decreased by about 1.16 million.

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS RECEIVING CASH ASSISTANCE FROM TANF/AFDC, IN THOUSANDS



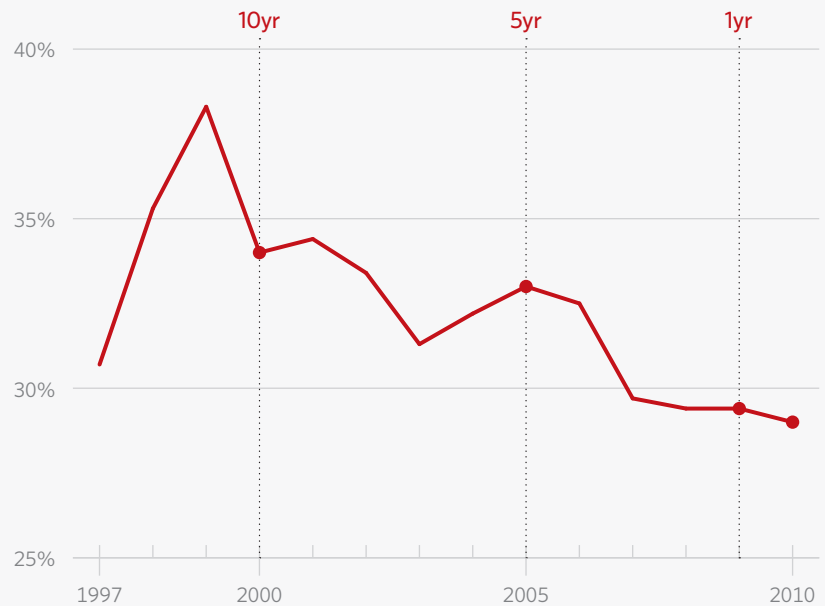
Note: Prior to 1996, TANF was known as the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program (AFDC).
Source: U.S. House Committee on Ways and Means, Green Book 2012.

CHANGES 10-year ▼ 5.0 5-year ▼ 4.0 1-year ▼ 0.4

TANF Work Participation Rate

From 2000 to 2010, the work participation rate for work-eligible households receiving aid from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program declined by 5 percentage points.

PERCENTAGE OF WORK-ELIGIBLE TANF HOUSEHOLDS ENGAGING IN WORK ACTIVITY



Note: Figures for 2008-2010 include TANF and Separate State Program-Maintenance of Effort (SSP-MOE) work participation.
Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.

Off the Track on Workfare

Robert Doar

The nation's work participation rate for cash welfare recipients is not only on the wrong track, it appears to be off the track. Or maybe it would be better to say the nation has lost the track. Any way you look at it, it is not good.

But first a little background: The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) work participation rate is the percentage of adult "work-eligible" recipients of federally funded cash welfare who are working or engaged in some work-like activity for at least 30 hours a week.

Work-like activities can include searching for a job or participating in a workfare program or even volunteering at a community-based nonprofit. When the historic welfare reform act passed in 1996, the participation rate had a very important purpose: holding states accountable for enforcing the legislation's work requirement. Failing to meet a fairly high standard for work participation would lead to significant fiscal penalties—and trust me, as someone who ran a state welfare agency, states pay close attention to fiscal penalties.

Because of this threat, welfare reform was not, by any measure, a free block grant to states. The federal grant of funds mandated that states require recipients to work or engage in work-like activities. Cash welfare was no longer an entitlement, but assistance with responsibilities for the client.

But, as with all things government, there existed then—and even more so today—a host of caveats, exceptions, special breaks, and avoidance techniques for states to get away with underperforming. The legislation set, for each state, the explicit goal of a 50 percent work-participation rate; falling below that bar meant the state would incur a financial pen-

alty. But because of these caveats and other exceptions, only a few states achieve the goal—and many fall well short. Yet, according to the most recent report to Congress from the Department of Health and Human Services, no state has failed compliance since 2004.

There is some good news: The total number of TANF recipients has fallen significantly from the peak years of the early 1990s—the numbers are down from more than 14 million to about 4 million. This decrease is partly the result of work requirements prompting potential recipients to not even bother with welfare—they decide to just get a job. It is true, however, that many former cash welfare recipients receive benefits from other government programs—Medicaid or food stamps, for instance—that do not contain a strong work requirement.

Despite the drop in overall cash welfare recipients, the nationwide work participation rate for the remaining recipients has failed to rise above 30 percent since 2006. And the federal oversight agency tasked with enforcing this core component of welfare reform has shown little interest in pursuing this objective. Consequently, regarding the TANF work rate, we are not only on the wrong track, but off the track. An important federal policy has lost its way. Restoring the original purpose of welfare reform requires reinvigorating the work-participation rate. —*Robert Doar is the Morgridge Fellow in Poverty Studies at the American Enterprise Institute and former commissioner of New York City's Human Resources Administration.*

Additional Resources

Labor Force Participation Rate

Not Looking for Work: Why Labor Force Participation Has Fallen During the Recession

<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2013/09/not-looking-for-work-why-labor-force-participation-has-fallen-during-the-recession>

Unwed Birth Rate

Marriage: America's Greatest Weapon Against Child Poverty

<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2012/09/marriage-americas-greatest-weapon-against-child-poverty>

FamilyFacts.org: Marriage & Family

<http://www.familyfacts.org/charts/marriage-and-family>

Self-Sufficiency

Understanding Poverty in the United States: Surprising Facts about America's Poor

<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/09/understanding-poverty-in-the-united-states-surprising-facts-about-americas-poor>

Total Welfare Spending

How to Get Welfare Spending Under Control

<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2013/03/how-to-get-welfare-spending-under-control>

Examining the Means-Tested Welfare State

<http://www.heritage.org/research/testimony/2012/05/examining-the-means-tested-welfare-state>

Subsidized Housing Participation

Examining the Means-Tested Welfare State

<http://www.heritage.org/research/testimony/2012/05/examining-the-means-tested-welfare-state>

Food Stamp Participation

Reforming the Food Stamp Program

<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2012/07/reforming-the-food-stamp-program>

TANF Participation

The Unfinished Work of Welfare Reform

<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2013/01/the-unfinished-work-of-welfare-reform>

TANF Work Participation Rate

FamilyFacts.org Brief: Breaking the Cycle of Welfare Dependency

<http://www.familyfacts.org/briefs/46/breaking-the-cycle-of-welfare-dependence>

Section Endnotes

Opting Out of the Burdens of Freedom

Lawrence M. Mead

1. Poverty and employment statistics come from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, various years.
2. Data from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.
3. Charles Murray, *Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960–2010* (New York: Crown Forum, 2012).
4. Annie Lowrey and Jonathan Weisman, “Health Care Law Projected to Cut the Labor Force,” *The New York Times*, February 5, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/05/us/politics/budget-office-revises-estimates-of-health-care-enrollment.html?_r=0 (accessed May 7, 2014).

The Crisis of Nonmarital Childbearing

Ron Haskins

1. Martha J. Bailey, “Fifty Years of Family Planning: New Evidence on the Long-Run Effects of Increasing Access to Contraception,” National Bureau of Economic Research *Working Paper* No. 19493, October 2013, <http://www.nber.org/papers/w19493.pdf> (accessed June 25, 2014).
2. Ibid.

Section Three

General Opportunity

General Opportunity Summary

- The percentage of 17-year-olds proficient in reading has remained flat despite massive spending increases for public education (pp. 61–62).
- Charter school enrollment and private school choice participation have made impressive progress over the past 10 years, each rising by more than 200 percent. As Virginia Walden Ford explains, “More than 300,000 children are attending private schools of their choosing thanks to options like vouchers, tuition tax credit programs, and education savings accounts” (p. 63).
- The average student loan debt held by each year’s graduates with loans increased by \$4,612 between 2001 and 2011. Average student loan debt now stands at \$26,500 (in 2012 dollars) (p. 64).
- From 2004 to 2014, the percentage of GDP taken by the federal government in taxes has increased by 1.7 percentage points (p. 68).
- From 2001 to 2011, the percentage of Americans working at start-up companies dropped 0.4 percentage point. As Tim Kane observes, “Unfortunately, bureaucratic regulations are growing at the same time start-ups are declining” (p. 69).

General Opportunity Indicators

	RIGHT TRACK	WRONG TRACK
Reading Proficiency (p. 61)		○
Charter School Enrollment (p. 62)	●	
Private School Choice Participation (p. 63)	●	
High School Graduation Rate (p. 64)	●	
Student Loan Debt (p. 64)		○
Employment-Population Ratio (p. 65)		○
Unemployment Rate (p. 65)		○
Job Openings Rate (p. 66)	●	
Job Hires Rate (p. 67)		○
Money Taxed Away by Federal Government (p. 68)		○
Start-Up Job Share (p. 69)		○
Major Federal Regulations (p. 70)		○
Economic Freedom (p. 70)		○

Climbing the Ladder of Upward Mobility Through Education

Lindsey M. Burke and Stuart M. Butler

Effective education is an important foundation for upward mobility. The quality of a child's education can determine whether the child is able to grab hold of, and advance on, the ladder of opportunity. Yet, thousands of elementary and secondary schools across the country are underperforming to the extent that they have been deemed "dropout factories." Meanwhile, higher education is increasingly important for economic advancement, but colleges suffer from a crisis of both quality and cost, strapping students with debt without guaranteeing they acquire the necessary skills or academic content mastery to prepare them for career success. These challenges call for student-centered education reforms that allow for choice, thereby encouraging more competitiveness regarding quality and cost. Most importantly, such choice is the key to ensuring all students have an opportunity to succeed.

The research on opportunity underscores the central importance of a good education to future success. Access to quality educational options, effective teachers, and a supportive learning environment at the K-12 level can set students on a path toward a rewarding career or an advanced degree. Yet, many students are assigned to schools with high dropout rates and chronic academic underperformance. Moreover, the erosion of a neighborhood culture that lauds success also stands in the way of effective education.

Teacher quality is a significant factor in whether a school helps or hinders upward mobility. As Stanford University's Eric A. Hanushek explains, teacher quality is by far the most important measured

aspect in determining student success. According to Hanushek's calculations, an above average teacher at the 84th percentile "will shift [a classroom of 20 students'] earnings up by more than \$400,000...a very low performing teacher (at the 16th percentile of effectiveness) will have a negative impact of \$400,000 compared to an average teacher."¹ Replacing the lowest-performing 5 percent to 7 percent of teachers with average teachers, he writes, would allow American students to catch up to the education level of students in higher-performing nations.

How can we ensure more students have access to better teachers? By making it easier for aspiring teachers to enter the classroom, and demanding solid performance once they are there. Incentives matter: tenure and step increases in pay based on time worked—rather than quality of instruction—do not encourage excellence. What is needed is a combination of subjective observations by peer teachers, principals, parents, and students, and objective evaluations based on growth models of student performance.

In addition to good teachers, literacy is a critical component of any future academic and economic success. But for many American children, this first, foundational step is never mastered: Just 35 percent of 4th graders are proficient in reading. Failing to acquire this most basic skill dooms upward economic mobility. Some states, however, are taking action. Florida, for instance, has ended the "social promotion" of third graders who cannot read. The result? Fourth graders in Florida have made gains in reading three times that of the national average.²

Graduating from high school is also essential to upward mobility. For every 100 high school students, roughly 76 will graduate. In some of the nation's large urban districts, the situation is far worse. In Detroit, Michigan, just 65 percent of students graduate from high school in four years—a stark reality that likely results from the fact that just 9 percent of 8th graders are proficient in reading. In Cleveland, Ohio, graduation rates hover around 54 percent; in Chicago, Illinois, just 63 percent of students graduate within 5 years. For modest-income parents whose children attend these failing schools there is no alternative. That is why school choice is so important.

Parental choice in education enables families to pursue the educational options that are right for them, providing the means for students to escape schools that are either underperforming or are not meeting their unique learning needs. Not only does choice—whether through vouchers, tuition tax credits, education savings accounts, charter schools, or homeschooling—provide students with options as diverse as their learning needs, it creates the conditions necessary to spur schools to implement reforms and strategies that work—or risk losing students and their attendant funding.

While a high school diploma is essential, in today's economy many young Americans will need college-level skills to advance substantially up the professional ladder. Indeed, a high school diploma is typically no longer enough to reach the American Dream—an American with a bachelor's degree can earn, on average, about 70 percent more each year than one with just a high school diploma.

Like the K–12 system, America's system of higher education is also facing a number of challenges. College degrees are enormously expensive to obtain, and the payoff is often below face value. Recent graduates who borrowed for college now average over \$26,000 in debt. Yet almost half of college graduates are in jobs that do not really need college skills, and more than half of recent graduates cannot find full-time work in their area of concentration. Employers increasingly say that graduates from colleges and universities are not adequately prepared. Other students incur tens of thousands of dollars of debt without graduating at all.

The good news in higher education is that the bad news on cost and quality is now triggering an entrepreneurial revolution. It is no surprise that the customer is demanding more and better information from colleges about graduation rates, expected earnings, and other

measures of value. The private sector is responding with a range of “scorecards” in publications like *Forbes* and *Kiplinger's* that reflect different visions of value. The proper role of public policy is to remove obstacles to that revolution—not to try to manage it.

The market is also responding with new and customized forms of higher education, reflecting the needs and lifestyles of modern Americans. This approach includes increasingly sophisticated online courses, as well as institutions with very different business models than the traditional four-year residential system—models that can sharply reduce costs while adapting to student preferences. These new ventures stress credentialed courses that fit the skills students need and employers demand, allowing students to seek an education from a range of vendors, including new entrants to the market.

But there are obstacles to this market-driven “disruptive innovation” that promises to do for college cost and quality what Steve Jobs did for music and telephones. For instance, the antiquated accreditation system gives a seal of approval to institutions, not courses, and favors the established providers, not the upstarts. Moreover, student aid is contingent on this federally determined accreditation system. If the promise of this higher education revolution is to be realized, student aid must be separated from accreditation. At the very least, states and industries should be able to accredit institutions available for aid. Better still would be degrees and aid based on competence in credentialed courses provided by any institution.

In order to foster upward mobility, public policy should create the conditions for educational choice to flourish. At the K–12 level, this means providing parents with control over their child's education through options like vouchers, tax credits, and education savings accounts. Such options empower parents to choose schools and educational options that meet their children's unique learning needs. At the postsecondary level, choice and innovation can be cultivated by reforming the ineffective system of accreditation and enabling new business models to enter the higher education market. At both the K–12 and university level, creating the conditions for markets, choice, and innovation to flourish is key to fostering opportunity.

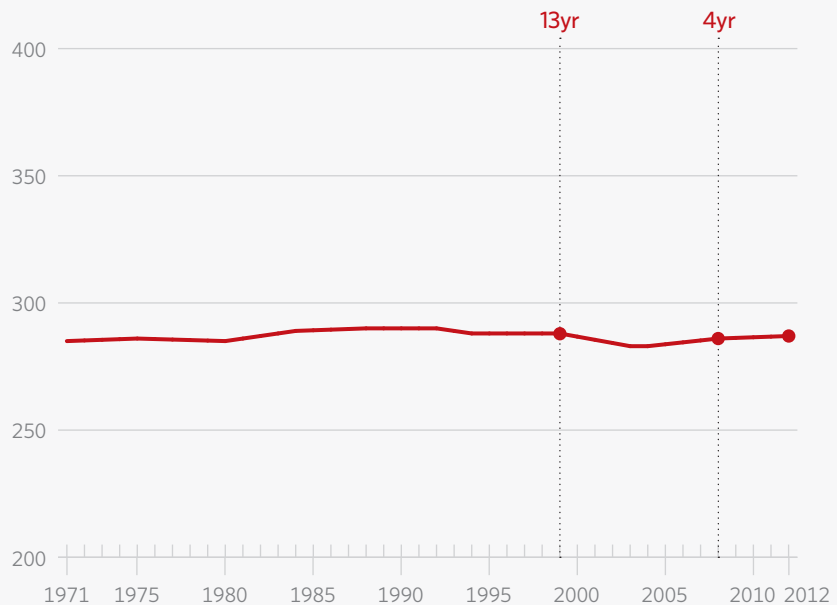
—*Lindsey M. Burke is the Will Skillman Fellow in Education Policy in the Institute for Family, Community, and Opportunity at The Heritage Foundation. Stuart M. Butler is Director of the Center for Policy Innovation at The Heritage Foundation.*

CHANGES 13-year ▼ 1 4-year ▲ 1

Reading Proficiency

From 1999 to 2012, the reading proficiency rate for 17-year-olds remained nearly unchanged, declining by 1 point on a 500-point scale.

READING PROFICIENCY FOR 17-YEAR-OLDS



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress.

Educational Achievement

Lisa Snell

According to data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Long-Term Trend assessments, over the past 40 years, student achievement has remained static.¹ The NAEP is “the largest nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America’s students know and can do in various subject areas.”² For high school seniors, very little has changed in terms of academic performance on the NAEP since the early 1970s. In 1971, 17-year-olds averaged 285 points (out of 500) in reading proficiency; in 1999, the average had risen to 288 points, and in 2012, it dipped to 287—zero statistical difference since 1971. Changes in 12th-grade math³ and science⁴ NAEP scores look about the same.

Meanwhile, per-pupil school costs have risen substantially over the same four decades.⁵ In 1970–1971, per-pupil spending in public schools was \$6,112, and by 2011, that number had grown to \$13,507 (in constant 2013 dollars).⁶

This growth in education spending has underwritten significant staffing increases.⁷ According to a 2013 report examining decades of school employ-

ment growth, between fiscal year 1950 and 2009, the number of K–12 public school employees grew by 386 percent. The student population increased by 96 percent over the same time period.⁸ Administrators and non-teaching staff increased by 702 percent—more than seven times the increase in students. In comparison, the number of teachers increased by 252 percent.

The ratio of students to school personnel has changed dramatically as a result. In 1950, the number of students per public school employee was 19.3; by 2011, it was 8.1 students per employee.⁹ Similarly, the pupil-to-teacher ratio fell from 27.5 students per teacher in 1950 to a historic low of 15 students per teacher in the fall of 2012.¹⁰

International test scores also show that education funding and academic performance do not necessarily correlate. In a 2013 report, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) examined the relationship between countries’ education spending and academic achievement and found that spending above \$35,000 per student

cumulatively between ages six and 15, is unrelated to performance.¹¹ In fact, nations that spend more than \$100,000 per student cumulatively during those school years—such as Norway, Switzerland, and the United States—get about the same results as nations with less than half the per-pupil spending levels, such as Estonia, Hungary, and Poland.

Both national and international spending and achievement data demonstrate that money alone cannot guarantee improvements in education performance.

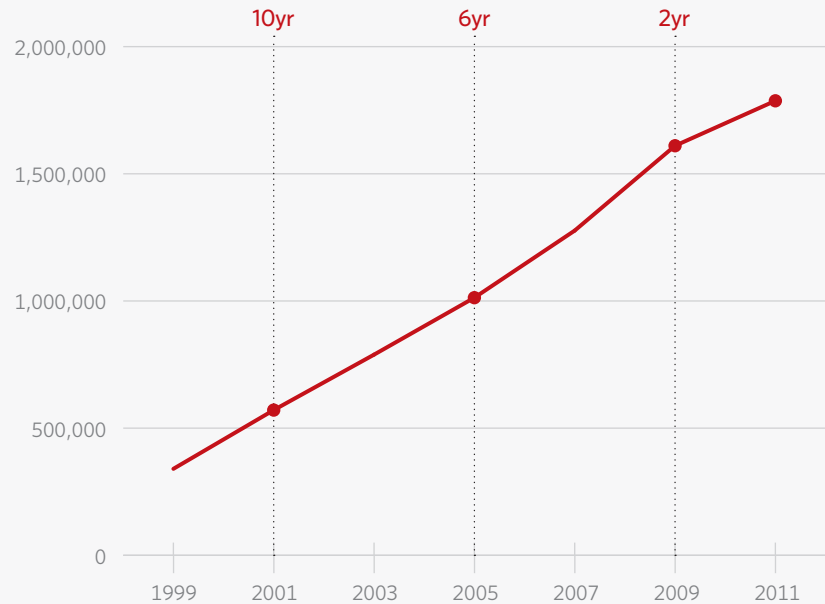
—*Lisa Snell is Director of Education and Child Welfare at the Reason Foundation.*

CHANGES 10-year ▲ 1,216,000 6-year ▲ 774,094 2-year ▲ 176,715

Charter School Enrollment

From 2001 to 2011, charter school* enrollment increased by about 1.22 million students.

NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED IN CHARTER SCHOOLS



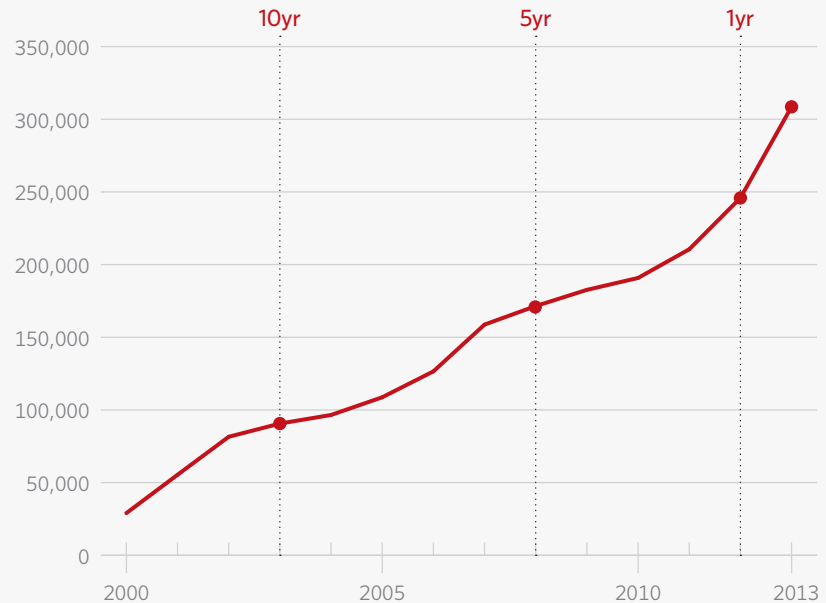
* A charter school is publicly funded but independently operated.
 Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

CHANGES 10-year ▲ 217,947 5-year ▲ 137,082 1-year ▲ 62,706

Private School Choice Participation

From 2003 to 2013, the number of students enrolled in private school choice programs increased by about 218,000.

NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED IN PRIVATE SCHOOL CHOICE PROGRAMS



Source: Alliance for School Choice Yearbook, 2013–2014.

School Choice Spreads ... and So Does Hope

Virginia Walden Ford

More than 300,000 children are attending private schools of their choosing thanks to options like vouchers, tuition tax credit programs, and education savings accounts. When all school choice policy options are considered—for example, deductions for homeschooling expenses—more than one million children are benefitting from choice in education.

The idea that parents have no control over where their children go to school is unthinkable. But currently in America, most children must go to a school based not on their choice but on the five digits of their zip code.

Parents are desperate to get their kids out of failing public schools and into better ones. School choice has made this desire a reality, and, consequently, children are succeeding where they previously had little hope for the future. For example, school choice helps students like Jordan White, who, after enrolling in a Washington, D.C., private school, was able to excel and went on to graduate from Oberlin College.

Jordan is now working in Japan as a translator for a large Japanese company. Without the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship she received to attend the school of her choice, Jordan believes that she would not have been so successful.

School choice programs provide families with an opportunity to send their children to schools that best meet their children's unique needs. The popularity of these programs demonstrates just how unsatisfied parents are with their local public schools.

Empowering parents with the freedom to choose what school they want their child to attend is the right thing to do.

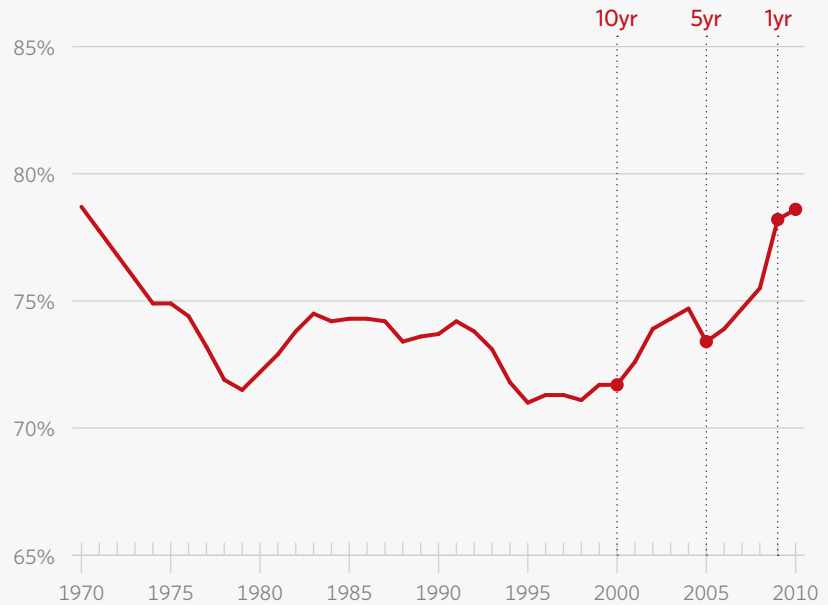
—*Virginia Walden Ford is a Visiting Fellow in the Domestic Policy Studies Department, of the Institute for Family, Community, and Opportunity, at The Heritage Foundation. She is the author of Voices, Choices, and Second Chances.*

CHANGES 10-year ▲ 6.9 5-year ▲ 5.2 1-year ▲ 0.4

High School Graduation Rate

From 2000 to 2010, the percentage of public high school students who graduated on time (i.e., four years after starting 9th grade) increased by 6.9 percentage points.

PERCENTAGE OF PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS RECEIVING HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA FOUR YEARS AFTER STARTING 9TH GRADE



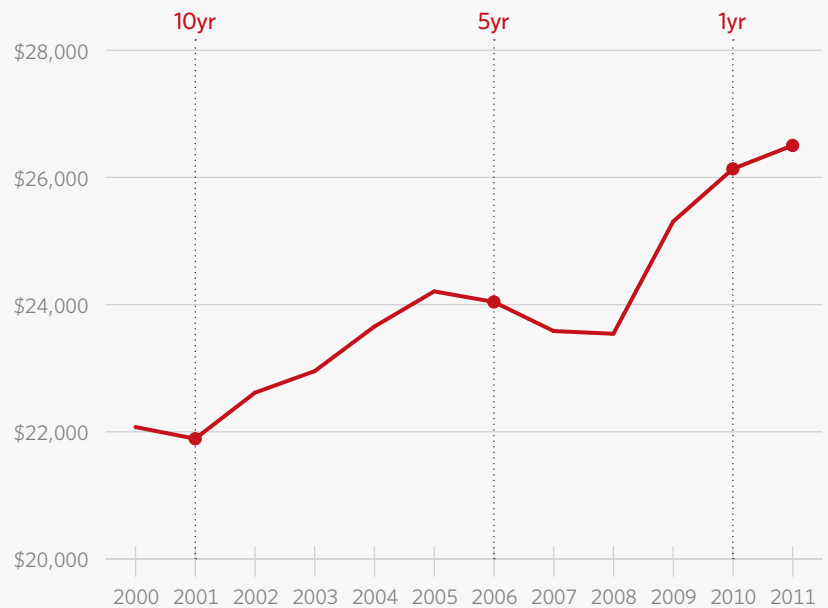
Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

CHANGES 10-year ▲ 4,612 5-year ▲ 2,461 1-year ▲ 368

Student Loan Debt

From 2001 to 2011, the average student loan debt held by each year's graduates with loans increased by \$4,612. Average student loan debt now stands at \$26,500 in 2012 dollars.

AVERAGE STUDENT DEBT PER BORROWER GRADUATE, FOUR-YEAR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES, IN 2012 DOLLARS



Source: The College Board, Trends in Higher Education.

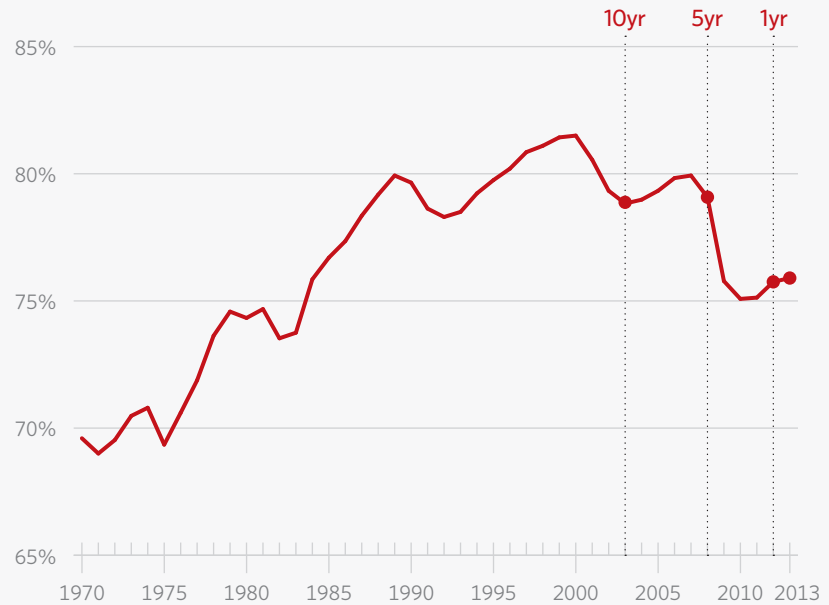
CHANGES 10-year ▼ 2.9 5-year ▼ 3.2 1-year ▲ 0.2

Employment-Population Ratio

From 2003 to 2013, the employment-population ratio for civilians ages 25 to 54 fell 2.9 percentage points.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, and U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

PERCENTAGE OF CIVILIANS AGES 25-54 WHO ARE WORKING



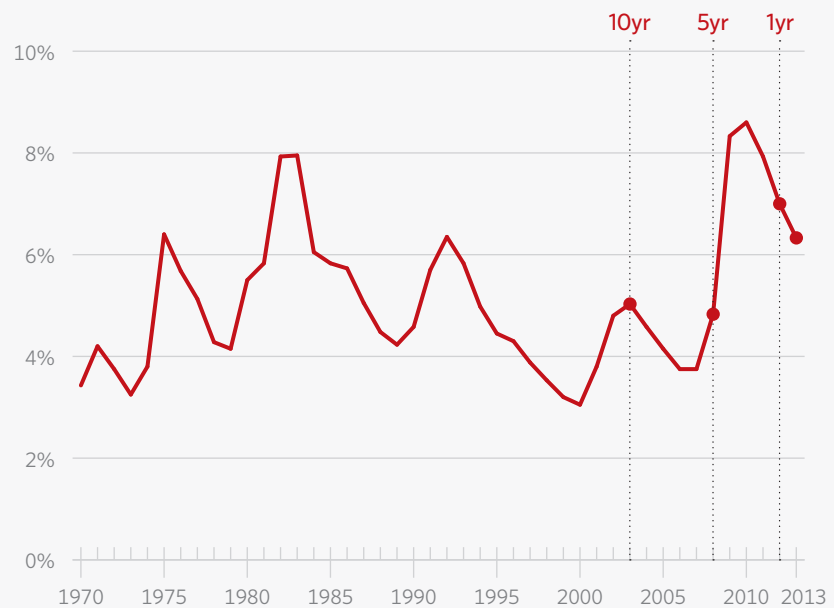
CHANGES 10-year ▲ 1.3 5-year ▲ 1.5 1-year ▼ 0.7

Unemployment Rate

The unemployment rate for civilians ages 25 to 54 rose by 1.3 percentage points from 2003 to 2013.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, and U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

PERCENTAGE OF UNEMPLOYED CIVILIANS AGES 25-54

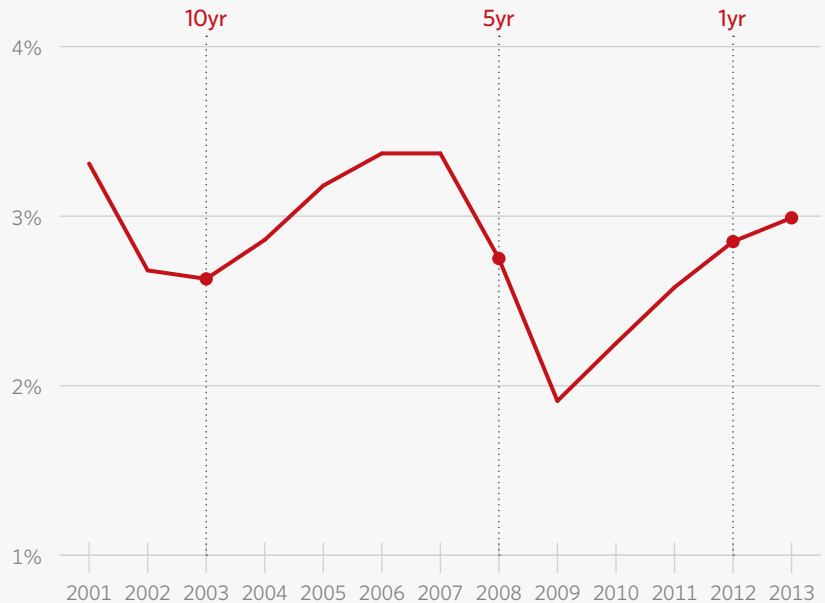


CHANGES 10-year ▲ 0.4 5-year ▲ 0.2 1-year ▲ 0.1

Job Openings Rate

From 2003 to 2013, the job openings rate increased by 0.4 percentage point.

MONTHLY PRIVATE-SECTOR JOB OPENINGS/VACANCIES AS A PERCENTAGE OF ALL PRIVATE-SECTOR JOBS



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey.

Jobs and the Great Recession

Diana Furchtgott-Roth

The Labor Department’s Job Openings and Labor Turnover data track the rates of job openings, hires, quits, and separations. These data are vital because they measure opportunities to get ahead in today’s workplace. The more job openings and hires, the greater the opportunity to enter the workforce and advance. When the economy is flourishing, the rate of quits (not shown) rises, as people feel confident enough to leave their jobs for better ones.

Job openings and hires have yet to recover from the recession of 2007–2009. These numbers have not yet climbed back to their historical peaks, which they reached in the middle of the last decade.

Job openings as a percent of employment peaked in 2006–2007, at 3.37 percent; the 2013 rate was 2.99 percent. Since the mid-2000s, increasing regulations on employers have encouraged them to move away from hiring whenever possible.

To give just one example among many, the Affordable Care Act penalizes employers with more than 49 workers. If employers do not offer the right kind of health care, they can face penalties of \$2,000 per

worker per year. When the law is fully phased in—and its effects are so damaging that the Administration has repeatedly postponed the employer penalty—firms hiring a 50th worker could be liable for \$40,000 in penalties (the first 30 workers are exempt).

Rather than having to pay the higher costs, some employers might prefer to keep their firms small. Others might prefer to invest in labor-saving technology, such as self-checkout machines at drugstores and supermarkets.

Hires peaked in 2005, at 4.39 percent; the 2013 rate was 3.67 percent. The hiring rate is rising more slowly than the rate of job openings, suggesting that the labor market’s problems include both weak supply and weak demand. Job openings reflect only employers’ willingness to hire, while actual hires reflect both that and employees’ willingness to work. At the same time, the labor force participation rate declined steadily after 2007, and now stands at levels not seen since 1978.

University of Chicago professor Casey Mulligan, in his book, *The Redistribution Recession*, has shown

that benefits account for half the decline in the labor force participation rate. He examines how increases in benefits, both from broader eligibility and more generous programs, have discouraged people from working by raising marginal tax rates among recipients. As beneficiaries lose their eligibility for benefits by working, the loss of these benefits has the same effect as a tax.

Lower rates of job openings and hires mean that it is harder for Americans to get ahead. Reversing these trends will depend on making America friendly once again to job creation.

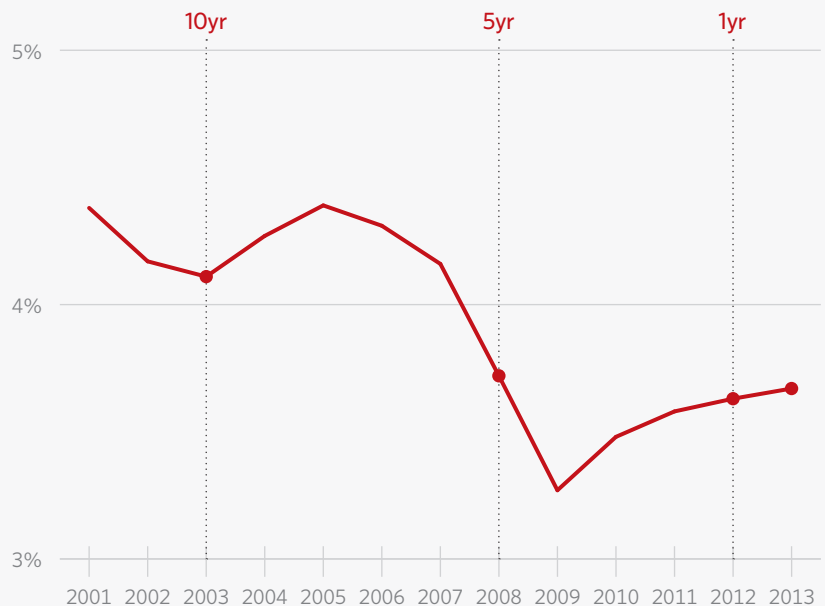
—*Diana Furchtgott-Roth is Director of Economics21 and Senior Fellow at the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, and former Chief Economist of the U.S. Department of Labor.*

CHANGES 10-year ▼ 0.4 5-year No change 1-year ▲ 0.1

Job Hires Rate

From 2003 to 2013, the job hires rate decreased by 0.4 percentage point.

MONTHLY PRIVATE-SECTOR NEW HIRES AS A PERCENTAGE OF ALL PRIVATE-SECTOR JOBS



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey.

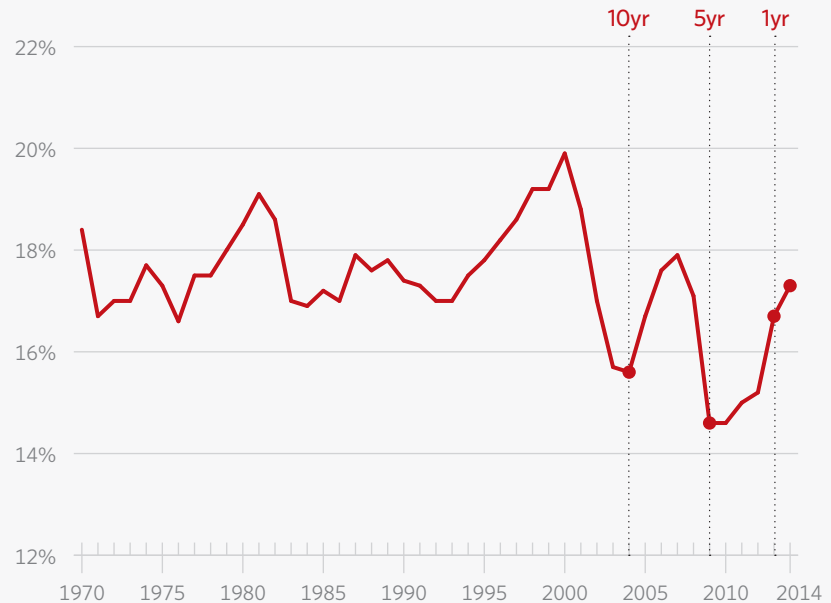
CHANGES 10-year ▲ 1.7 5-year ▲ 2.7 1-year ▲ 0.6

Money Taxed Away by Federal Government

From 2004 to 2014, the percentage of GDP* taken by the federal government in taxes has increased by 1.7 percentage points.

* GDP is the total value of all goods and services. Note: Figure for 2014 is a projection.
Source: Office of Management and Budget, FY 2015 Budget of the U.S. Government.

PERCENTAGE OF GDP TAXED AWAY BY FEDERAL GOVERNMENT



The Family Tax Burden

Stephen Moore

We talk about taxes as a “burden” because they reduce the take-home pay of American workers, the profits of American businesses, and the purchasing power of American consumers. Over the past century, the overall federal tax burden steadily grew from about 5 percent of national income to almost 20 percent. Over the last decade, tax receipts declined due to the recession and fiscal policy, but taxes have increased over the last five years. This trend roughly corresponds with the growth in government spending.

Americans effectively work one day a week to pay federal taxes and the other four days to pay their bills and take care of their families. Taking into account state and local taxes, almost one in three dollars of a worker’s earnings go to the tax collector. Taxes are, for many households, the single largest expenditure item in the family budget.

Nor is the federal tax burden evenly spread. The wealthy pay the largest share of their income in taxes, while the bottom 20 percent of earners pay very little federal tax. You would not know it from media reporting, but the U.S. has one of the world’s most progres-

sive income tax structures—the richest 1 percent pay almost 40 percent of federal income taxes.

The income tax burden is also borne in the invisible tax of lost productivity and output. When you tax something, you get less of it, and the federal tax code punishes saving, investment and business creation. Our byzantine income tax code has not been modernized since the mid-1980s. Pursuing economic success is like trying to win the Indianapolis 500 in a Pinto. Tax rates are too high and confiscatory, tax loopholes are too plentiful, and complexity makes the tax code an economic drain.

Tax burdens are likely to continue climbing if we do not rein in our rapidly growing debt. Without government spending reductions, taxes will likely rise. Some experts believe rates could rise to 50 percent or more on “the rich.” Such crushing taxes will indebt future generations—hardly the financial legacy Americans want to leave their children and grandchildren.

—**Stephen Moore** is Chief Economist in the Institute for Economic Freedom and Opportunity at The Heritage Foundation.

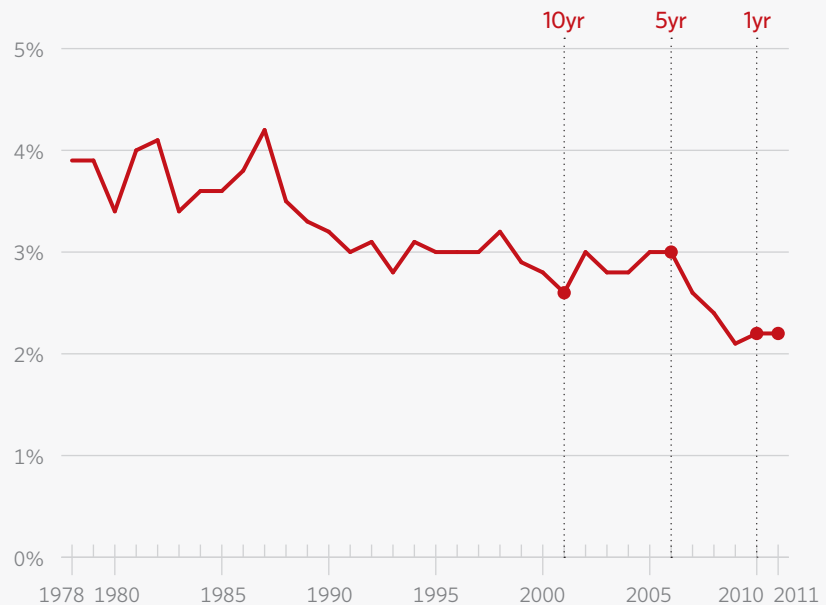
CHANGES 10-year ▼ 0.4 5-year ▼ 0.8 1-year No change

Start-Up Job Share

From 2001 to 2011, the percent of Americans working at start-up companies dropped 0.4 percentage point.

Note: A start-up is defined as a firm that is less than one year old.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Business Dynamics Statistics, and Heritage Foundation calculations.

START-UP JOBS AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL PRIVATE-SECTOR EMPLOYMENT



The Slow Decline of American Entrepreneurship

Tim Kane

Start-up companies are the reason America's economy is more innovative, prosperous, and dynamic than the economies of other industrialized countries around the world. New companies create roughly 3 million jobs every year, while existing companies tend to shed one million jobs—it is no secret why a healthy entrepreneurial culture is important. Think of it this way: Roughly one in 10 U.S. companies are founded each year, and these young firms create 100 percent of all net new jobs. Even in gross terms, start-ups punch above their weight, with 16 percent of all new jobs created by start-ups. Older firms create fewer jobs per firm, but, on average, cut even more, for a net negative impact.

While start-ups have always played an important role in the U.S. economy, the extent to which they drive job creation was, until recently, underappreciated. However, thanks to new data from the federal government, we are able to identify job creation across all firms according to their date of “birth.” Yet, as important as this insight is, the data, which

only goes back as far as 1977, also shows an alarming downward trend: America's entrepreneurship rate is declining.

During the Carter Administration, 14 percent of American companies were start-ups. That rate declined by one percentage point during the Reagan years, two points during the recession of the George H. W. Bush presidency, held steady under Clinton, dropped a percentage point under George W. Bush, and then dropped two full points during the first term of Barack Obama.

We can only speculate why entrepreneurship is declining, but it seems that America's economic culture is trending toward the European model. In Europe, as well as Japan, large corporations are the norm, as are ample welfare programs and an erosion of familial bonds. America's history of entrepreneurship is strongly rooted in a culture of hard work and self-reliance. Unfortunately, bureaucratic regulations are growing at the same time start-ups are declining. Coincidence?

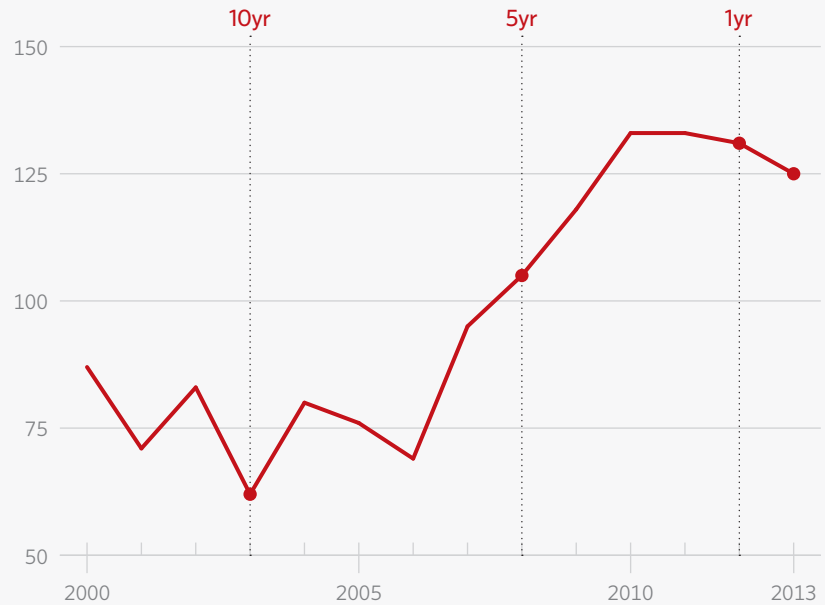
—*Tim Kane is an economist and Research Fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University.*

CHANGES **10-year ▲ 63** 5-year ▲ 20 1-year ▼ 6

Major Federal Regulations

The number of economically significant regulations planned each year rose by 63 regulations from 2003 to 2013.

ANNUAL NUMBER OF PLANNED REGULATIONS EXPECTED TO COST \$100 MILLION OR MORE



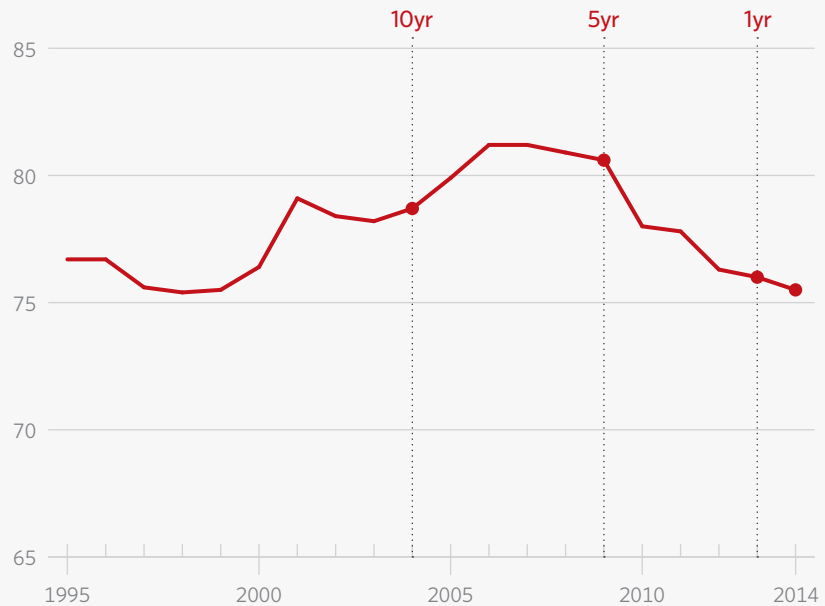
Note: Figures are for Fall period except for 2012 which is for Spring/Fall.
Sources: The Heritage Foundation, "Red Tape Rising," and Office of Management and Budget.

CHANGES **10-year ▼ 3.2** 5-year ▼ 5.2 1-year ▼ 0.5

Economic Freedom

The overall U.S. score in the Index of Economic Freedom fell by 3.2 points from 2004 to 2014.

U.S. OVERALL SCORE FROM THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION'S INDEX OF ECONOMIC FREEDOM



Source: The Heritage Foundation and Wall Street Journal, 2014 Index of Economic Freedom.

Additional Resources

Educational Achievement Levels

Does Spending More on Education Improve Academic Achievement?

<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2008/09/does-spending-more-on-education-improve-academic-achievement>

How Escalating Education Spending Is Killing Crucial Reform

<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2012/10/how-escalating-education-spending-is-killing-crucial-reform>

Charter School Enrollment

School Choice in America 2011: Educational Opportunity Reaches New Heights

<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/08/school-choice-in-america-2011-educational-opportunity-reaches-new-heights>

Private School-Choice Enrollment

Choosing to Succeed

<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2013/01/choosing-to-succeed-choosing-to-succeed>

Expanding Education Choices: From Vouchers and Tax Credits to Savings Accounts

<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2013/07/expanding-education-choices-from-vouchers-and-tax-credits-to-savings-accounts>

High School Graduation Rate

Barriers to High School Completion Create Barriers to Economic Mobility

<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2014/05/barriers-to-high-school-completion-create-barriers-to-economic-mobility>

The Value of Parental Choice in Education: A Look at the Research

<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2014/03/the-value-of-parental-choice-in-education-a-look-at-the-research>

Student Loan Debt

Accreditation: Removing the Barriers to Higher Education Reform

<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2012/09/accreditation-removing-the-barrier-to-higher-education-reform>

College 2020

<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2013/03/college-2020>

Employment-Population Ratio

Supply and Demand: Why Job Growth Remains Sluggish

<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2013/11/supply-and-demand-why-job-growth-remains-sluggish>

Unemployment

Not Looking for Work: Why Labor Force Participation Has Fallen During the Recession

<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2013/09/not-looking-for-work-why-labor-force-participation-has-fallen-during-the-recession>

Job Openings Rate

Delayed Recovery Historically Slow

<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2012/02/delayed-recovery-historically-slow>

Job Hires Rate

Supply and Demand: Why Job Growth Remains Sluggish

<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2013/11/supply-and-demand-why-job-growth-remains-sluggish>

Money Taxed Away by Federal Government

The Dos and Don'ts of Tax Reform

<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2013/04/the-dos-and-donts-of-tax-reform>

Start-Up Job Share

Don't Crush the Ability of Entrepreneurs and Small Businesses to Raise Capital

<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2014/02/dont-crush-the-ability-of-entrepreneurs-and-small-businesses-to-raise-capital>

Major Federal Regulations

Red Tape Rising: Five Years of Regulatory Expansion

<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2014/03/red-tape-rising-five-years-of-regulatory-expansion>

Economic Freedom

The 2014 Index of Economic Freedom

<http://www.heritage.org/index/>

Section Endnotes

Climbing the Ladder of Upward Mobility Through Education

Lindsey M. Burke and Stuart M. Butler

1. Eric A. Hanushek, "Valuing Teachers: How Much is a Good Teacher Worth?" *Education Next*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Summer 2011), <http://educationnext.org/valuing-teachers/> (accessed May 7, 2014).
2. Matthew Ladner, "The Real Story: Florida Students Have Made Big Academic Strides in the FCAT Era," *redefinED*, July 26, 2013, <http://www.redefinedonline.org/2012/07/the-real-story-florida-students-have-made-big-academic-strides-in-the-fcat-era/#sthash.8XEKfb8f.dpuf> (accessed April 28, 2014).

Educational Achievement

Lisa Snell

1. Bobby D. Rampey, Gloria S. Dion, and Patricia L. Donohue, "NAEP 2008 Trends in Academic Progress," U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, April 2009, <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pubs/main2008/2009479.asp> (accessed May 13, 2014).
2. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), "NAEP Overview," <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about/> (accessed July 11, 2014).
3. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, "Long-Term Trends in Reading and Mathematics Achievement," 2013, <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=38> (accessed May 13, 2014).
4. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, "Long-Term Trends in Student Science Performance," NCE 98-465, September 1998, <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs98/web/98465.asp> (accessed May 13, 2014).
5. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, "Expenditures," 2013, <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=66> (accessed May 13, 2014).
6. U.S. Department of Education, *Digest of Education Statistics*, "Total and current expenditures per pupil in public elementary and secondary schools: Selected years, 1919-20 through 2010-11," http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13_236.55.asp (accessed July 10, 2014).
7. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics*, 2013, http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d09/tables/dt09_064.asp (accessed May 13, 2014).
8. Benjamin Scafidi, PhD, "The School Staffing Surge: Decades of Employment Growth in America's Public Schools, Part II," The Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, February 2, 2013, <http://www.edchoice.org/Research/Reports/The-School-Staffing-Surge--Decades-of-Employment-Growth-in-Americas-Public-Schools--Part-2.aspx> (accessed May 13, 2014).
9. U.S. Department of Education, *Digest of Education Statistics*, "Staff employed in public elementary and secondary school systems, by type of assignment: Selected years, 1949-50 through fall 2011," http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13_213.10.asp (accessed July 11, 2014).
10. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, "Teacher Trends," 2013, <http://nces.ed.gov/FastFacts/display.asp?id=28> (accessed May 13, 2014).
11. Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), "Does Money Buy Strong Performance in PISA?" PISA in Focus, February 2012, <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisaproducts/pisainfocus/49685503.pdf> (accessed May 13, 2014).

Methodology

Data for each indicator are drawn from publicly available sources. Each indicator used the most recently available data as of March 2014. Wherever possible, the *Index* uses annually updated data.

The change over a period of years is reported for each of the indicators. For most indicators, this report includes 10-year, five-year, and one-year changes. The only exceptions are those for which annual data are not available, and those exceptions are noted on their charts.

In addition, the comprehensive table on pages 78–79 reports results from regression analysis and their statistical significance for each indicator. Regression analysis uses all indicator data over the given time period to estimate, or “draw,” a “best-fitting” straight line through the data points for those years. This enables us to get a sense of the general trend over time and smooth out year-to-year variations that might be true changes or artifacts of methodological or sampling issues.

For most indicators, the regression models include available data points from the past decade. Thus, the slopes of the linear regression lines through the data points for an estimated period present the general trends in indicators for those years. Beyond understanding this general trend, however, these regression models should not be used for statistical inference.

For all but one indicator, the comprehensive table presents simple linear regression models in which the years are the independent “X” variables and the indicators are the dependent “Y” variables. When

looking at the past 10 annual changes in data, the slope of the linear regression line provides an estimate of the overall change per year.

For the indicator variable “Money Taxed Away by Federal Government,” we used a first-order autoregressive model to capture the dynamic nature of revenues over time. In this instance, we developed a regression model aiming to predict 2014’s (projected) revenues from 2013’s, 2013’s from 2012’s, etc. Thus, this first-order autoregressive model is nothing but a simple linear regression using one year’s revenues as the dependent variable and the prior year’s revenues as the independent variable.

For three indicators—the percentage that attends religious services weekly, the percentage of sexually experienced 12th-graders, and charter school enrollment—only biannual data were available. Consequently, the annual average change was determined using the past five rather than 10 changes in those cases.

One indicator—the reading proficiency of 17-year-olds—is drawn from a data source available only for every four years.

Indicators included in this report are illustrative and not a direct or exhaustive measure of culture and opportunity.

Definitions

Rate: A rate indicates the actual occurrences of a certain event given the number of possible events or a population that could experience the event. Rates are calculated by the event number divided by the

possible number of events or the population studied. For example, the marriage rate per 1,000 is the annual number of marriages that took place divided by the population of unmarried women age 15 and older for that year, and then multiplied by 1,000.

Percentage: A percentage is calculated by dividing the number in a specific category by the entire category and then multiplying that ratio by 100. For example, the percent of individuals in poverty is calculated by the number of individuals whose incomes fall below the official federal poverty line divided by the total population and then multiplied by 100.

Regression Slope Coefficient: This illustrates the value of how much change there is in the dependent “Y” variable, or the indicator, for one unit of change in the “X” independent variable, or the year. In other words, the slope coefficient estimates the annual change for the period estimated. A negative number indicates a decreasing trend, and a positive number, an increasing trend. For example, the 10-year (2001 to 2011) regression slope coefficient for the marriage rate is -1.03 , meaning that during this period, each year, on average, the marriage rate decreased by 1.03 marriages per 1,000 unmarried women age 15 and older.

Regression Intercept Coefficient: This is the point where a regression line crosses the vertical or Y-axis—that is, the value of Y when X is zero. The intercept is often difficult to interpret meaningfully, depending on the regression model analyzed, but is included in the comprehensive table as it is the convention to report this regression estimator.

Statistical Significance and Goodness of Fit of Regression Coefficients: For each of our 36 indicators, we estimated a simple linear regression model using time as the independent variable and the indicator as the dependent variable, testing the null hypothesis that the regression slope coefficient was zero against a two-sided alternative. The p-value is defined as the probability of obtaining as extreme a test statistic (for the pertinent slope coefficient) as what was actually observed under the assumption that the null hypothesis is true. A slope coefficient estimate is typically determined to be statistically significant if its p-value fell below the critical threshold of $\alpha=0.05$. We also similarly tested our intercept coefficients.

The coefficient of determination, R^2 , provides a diagnostic regarding the goodness of fit of the regression model.

Culture and Opportunity Indicators, Master Table (Page 1 of 2)

Indicator	Latest-Year Data	1-Year Change	5-Year Change	10-Year Change	10-Year Regression Intercept Coefficient*	p-value of Intercept Coefficient	10-Year Regression Slope Coefficient*	p-value of the Slope Coefficient	Coefficient of Determination (R ²)
CULTURE									
Marriage Rate, Marriages per 1,000 Unmarried Females Ages 15 and Older	34.8	-0.6	-4.5	-10.3	2,114.66	< 0.001	-1.03	< 0.001	0.983
Divorce Rate, Number of Divorces per 1,000 Total Population	3.6	0.0	-0.1	-0.4	85.75	0.001	-0.04	0.001	0.718
Total Fertility Rate, Births per Woman	1.88	-0.01	-0.24	-0.14	35.21	0.018	-0.017	0.024	0.450
Single-Parent Households, Percentage of Children Living in Single-Parent Households	27.8	-0.6	1.5	0.3	69.88	0.708	-0.02 ¹	0.819	0.006
Teen Drug Use, Percentage of 12th-Graders Who Used Illicit Drugs in Past Month	25.5	0.3	3.2	1.4	-460.17	0.067	0.24	0.056	0.347
Abstinence Among High Schoolers, Percentage of High School Students Who Ever Had Sex	63.1	(2-year) 0.8	(6-year) 0.0	2.6	-413.18	0.233	0.237	0.182	0.395
Abortion Rate, Abortions per 1,000 Women Ages 15-44	16.9	-0.8	-3.0	-4.0	692.24	< 0.001	-0.34	< 0.001	0.865
Religious Attendance, Percentage Attending Religious Services Weekly	30.2	(2-year) -0.1	(6-year) -1.0	-1.0	481.22	0.138	-0.22	0.159	0.428
Volunteering, Percentage of Adults Volunteering	25.4	-1.1	-1.0	-3.4	618.49	0.001	-0.29	0.002	0.674
Violent Crime Rate, Number of Violent Crimes per 100,000 People	386.9	-0.2	-84.9	-107.5	21,672.44	< 0.001	-10.58	< 0.001	0.829
POVERTY & DEPENDENCE									
Labor Force Participation Rate, Percentage of Adults Ages 25-54 Working or Searching for Work	81.0	-0.5	-2.1	-2.0	455.70	< 0.001	-0.19	0.001	0.713
Unwed Birth Rate, Percentage of Births to Unmarried Women, by Race	40.7	0.0	1.0	6.7	-1,479.54	< 0.001	0.76	< 0.001	0.869
Self-Sufficiency, Percentage of Individuals Who Live in Poverty (Excluding Welfare Benefits)	15.0	0.0	2.5	2.9	-643.45	< 0.001	0.33	< 0.001	0.812
Total Welfare Spending, Federal and State Welfare Spending in Billions of 2012 Dollars	949	33	168	246	-54,363.03	< 0.001	27.48	< 0.001	0.900
Subsidized Housing Participation, Number of Individuals Living in Subsidized Housing, in Thousands	10,042	-59	650	(8-year) 1,234	-364,661.85	< 0.001	186.35	< 0.001	0.928
Food Stamp Participation, Number of Individuals Receiving Food Stamps, in Thousands	47,636	1,027	19,413	26,386	-5,717,864.82	< 0.001	2,864.05	< 0.001	0.925
TANF Participation, Number of Individuals Receiving Cash Assistance from TANF/AFDC, in Thousands	4,559	-39	-23	-1,158	311,551.53	0.002	-152.89	0.002	0.681
TANF Work Participation Rate, Percentage of Work-Eligible Adult TANF Recipients Engaging in Work Activity	29.0	-0.4	-4.0	-5.0	1,123.48	< 0.001	-0.54	< 0.001	0.814

1 - The trend in single-parent households is overall negative (increasing) when considering the 10-year change. Using regression analysis the annual change is overall positive (decreasing) simply because the linear regression takes into account all points across the time horizon.

* Note: Beyond understanding the overall trends of the indicators across time, statistical inferences should not be drawn from these regressions.

APPENDIX TABLE 1

Culture and Opportunity Indicators, Master Table (Page 2 of 2)

Indicator	Latest-Year Data	1-Year Change (2-year)	5-Year Change (4-year)	10-Year Change (13-year)	10-Year Regression Intercept Coefficient*	p-value of Intercept Coefficient	10-Year Regression Slope Coefficient*	p-value of the Slope Coefficient	Coefficient of Determination (R ²)
Reading Proficiency, Reading Proficiency for 17-Year-Olds	287	n/a	(4-year) 1	(13-year) -1	329.25	0.610	-0.02	0.944	0.003
Charter School Enrollment, Number of Students Enrolled in Charter Schools	1,787,000	(2-year) 176,715	(6-year) 774,094	1,216,000	-251,228,457	< 0.001	125,824	< 0.001	0.994
Private School Choice Participation, Number of Students Enrolled in Private School Choice Programs	308,560	62,706	137,082	217,947	-38,983,422.31	< 0.001	19,499.66	< 0.001	0.937
High School Graduation Rate, Percentage of Public School Students Receiving High School Diploma Four Years After Starting 9th Grade	78.6	0.4	5.2	6.9	-1,049.94	0.001	0.56	< 0.001	0.775
Student Loan Debt, Average Student Debt per Borrower Graduate, Four-Year Colleges and Universities, in 2012 Dollars	26,503	368	2,461	4,612	-766,446.74	< 0.001	394.06	< 0.001	0.832
Employment-Population Ratio, Percentage of Civilians Ages 25-54 who are Working	75.9	0.2	-3.2	-2.9	1,059.24	0.002	-0.49	0.003	0.641
Unemployment Rate, Percentage of Unemployed Civilians Ages 25-54	6.3	-0.7	1.5	1.3	-757.20	0.023	0.38	0.022	0.459
Job Openings Rate, Monthly Private-Sector Job Openings/Vacancies as a Percentage of All Private-Sector Jobs	3.0	0.1	0.2	0.4	70.11	0.317	-0.03 ²	0.336	0.084
Job Hires Rate, Monthly Private-Sector New Hires as a Percentage of All Private-Sector Jobs	3.7	0.1	0.0	-0.4	162.74	0.001	-0.08	0.001	0.636
Money Taxed Away by Federal Government, Percentage of GDP Taken by Federal Taxes	17.3	0.6	2.7	1.7	6.07	0.205	0.63	0.048	0.368
Start-Up Job Share, Start-up Jobs as a Percentage of Total Private-Sector Employment	2.2	0.0	-0.8	-0.4	157.62	0.007	-0.08	0.008	0.562
Major Federal Regulations, Annual Number of Planned Regulations Expected to Cost \$100 Million or More	125	-6	20	63	-15,249.62	< 0.001	7.65	< 0.001	0.863
Economic Freedom, U.S. Overall Score from the Heritage Foundation's <i>Index of Economic Freedom</i>	75.5	-0.5	-5.2	-3.2	1,101.51	0.003	-0.51	0.005	0.602

2 - The trend in job openings is overall positive (increasing) when considering the 10-year change. Using regression analysis the annual change is overall negative (decreasing) simply because the linear regression takes into account all points across the time horizon.

* Note: Beyond understanding the overall trends of the indicators across time, statistical inferences should not be drawn from these regressions.

Indicator Sources

Marriage Rate

Marriage rate (per 1,000 unmarried women age 15 and older), 1970-1996: U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2001* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2002), Table 117, <http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/01statab/vitstat.pdf> (accessed July 10, 2014). 1997-2011: Calculated by The Heritage Foundation, by dividing the annual number of marriages, provided by the National Center for Health Statistics, by the number of unmarried women age 15 and older, provided by the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey, and then multiplying the ratio by 1,000. Marriage rate, 1997: "Births, Deaths, Marriages, and Divorces: Provisional Data for 1998," *National Vital Statistics Reports*, Vol. 47, No. 21 (June 6, 1999), Table 1, http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr47/nvs47_21.pdf (accessed July 12, 2014); Number of marriages, 1998-1999: "Births, Deaths, Marriages, and Divorces: Provisional Data for 1999," *National Vital Statistics Reports*, Vol. 48, No. 19 (February 22, 2001), Table 1, http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr48/nvs48_19.pdf (accessed July 12, 2014); Number of marriages, 2000-2011: "National Marriage and Divorce Rate Trends," National Vital Statistics System, http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/marriage_divorce_tables.htm (accessed July 12, 2014). Number of unmarried women age 15 and older: U.S. Census Bureau, "People and Households, Families and Living Arrangements Main, Data, Historical Time Series, Table MS-1," <http://www.census.gov/hhes/families/data/marital.html> (accessed July 12, 2014).

Divorce Rate

Crude divorce rate, 1960-1969: "Advanced Reports of Final Divorce Statistics, 1989 and 1990," *Monthly Vital Statistics Report*, Vol. 43, No. 9 (March 22, 1995), Table 1, http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/mvssr/supp/mv43_09s.pdf (accessed July 12, 2014). Divorce rate, 1970-1999: U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2012* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2013), Table 78, <http://www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/12statab/vitstat.pdf> (accessed July 12, 2014). Divorce rate, 2000-2011: "National Marriage and Divorce Rate Trends," National Vital Statistics System, http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/marriage_divorce_tables.htm (accessed July 12, 2014).

Note: Data in this chart are based on divorces per 1,000 total population, including both married and unmarried adults, as well as children. The National Center for Health Statistics used to calculate a more refined divorce rate, based on the number of divorces per 1,000 married women ages 15 and older, but no longer does so. In 1996, the National Center for Health Statistics began collecting only provisional divorce rate data, based on preliminary counts of divorce certificates from states. As of 2005, six states have stopped reporting any divorce statistics: California, Georgia, Hawaii, Indiana, Louisiana, and Minnesota. Thus, population data for these states are also excluded when calculating the divorce rate.

Total Fertility Rate

Joyce A. Martin et al., "Births: Final Data for 2012," *National Vital Statistics Reports*, Vol. 62, No. 9 (December 30, 2013), Tables 4 & 8, http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr62/nvsr62_09.pdf (accessed July 10, 2014).

Single-Parent Households

U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, "Families and Living Arrangements: Living Arrangements of Children," Table CH-1, <http://www.census.gov/hhes/families/data/children.html> (accessed June 4, 2014).

Note: The percentage of children in single-parent households was calculated by dividing the total number of children in one-parent households by all children in population.

Teen Drug Use

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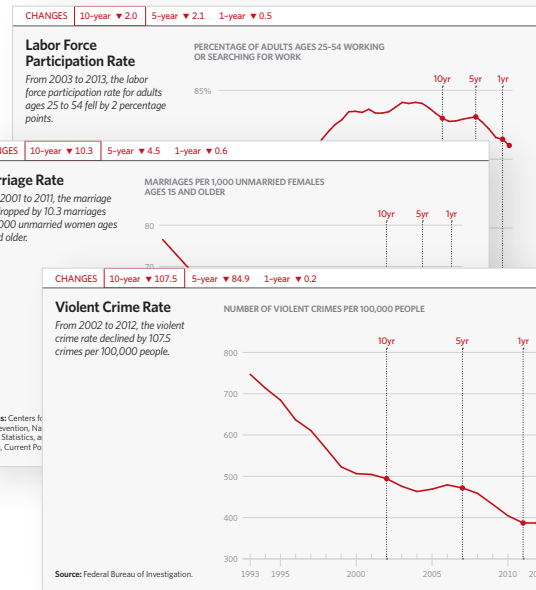
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