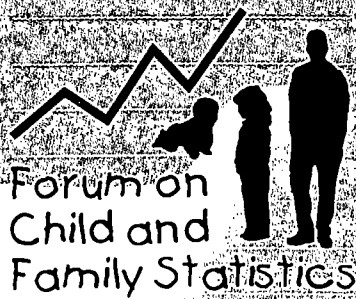

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America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being



HISPANIC CHILDREN NOW OUTNUMBER BLACKS

ASSOCIATED PRESS

336 Words, 2380 Characters

07/15/1998, The Plain Dealer Cleveland, OH

FINAL / ALL

Page 1A (Copyright (c) The Plain Dealer 1998)

For the first time, there are more Hispanic children than black children in America, the government said, in a harbinger of things to come for the rest of the nation.

By 2005, the Census Bureau projects that Hispanics will overtake blacks as the largest minority group in the United States, and by 2050, there should be more Hispanics than all other minorities combined.

But in 1997, children had already caught up - just barely - as birth rates for Hispanic women exceeded black birth rates.

That's one of a myriad of statistics painting a picture of children in America in the government's annual report, to be released today, on key indicators of the well-being of the nation's children, who numbered 69.5 million in 1997.

Overall, the news was good: More children were immunized, read aloud to and finished high school. Fewer infants died, fewer kids had lead in their blood and fewer teenagers were killed.

"There are more indicators that are getting better than are getting worse," said Dr. Duane Alexander, director of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

But there was bad news, too: Children who were poor, black or Hispanic did worse on many fronts. There were more low-birthweight babies and more teens smoking and drinking.

"And we're not talking about an occasional drink. We're talking five drinks in a row in the last two weeks," Alexander said. The same goes for smoking, he said: "These kids are hooked."

But the report's most dramatic data may be the demographic changes among minority children.

Hispanics and blacks each now make up about 15 percent of American children, with Hispanics slightly outnumbering blacks. The Hispanic population is concentrated in a handful of large states, though it is growing across the country, and the changing demographics pose numerous challenges.

"It's something that has to be taken into account whether you're delivering health services, educational services, social services or whatever," Alexander said.

"We've got to do a better job of reaching that population," Alexander said.

07/15/1998
Portland Oregonian
SUNRISE, Page A09
Statistics, (Copyright (c) The Oregonian 1998)

Summary: Hispanics by 2005 will overtake blacks as a minority and by 2050 will outnumber all other minorities combined.

For the first time, there are more Hispanic children than black children in America, the government said, in a harbinger of things to come for the rest of the nation.

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"It's something that has to be taken into account whether you're delivering health services, educational services, social services or whatever," Alexander said.

Compiling statistics from across the federal government, the report also finds:

- * Blood lead levels in children ages 1 to 5 declined to just 6 percent in 1988-1994. That's down from 88 percent in 1976-1980, before lead was banned from paint and plumbing supplies.

- * The child poverty rate held steady at about 20 percent, though the income gap grew, with increases in the number of children living in extreme poverty and the number with high incomes.

- * Four of 10 poor people in the nation were under age 18 in 1996. Nearly six in 10 children under age 6 living with a single mom were in poverty.

- * The number of kids without health insurance at any time during 1996 grew to 10.6 million, or 15 percent of all children.

- * The proportion of children born with low birthweight hit a two-decade high in 1996, though the infant mortality rate continued to fall. That's because high-risk infants are now more likely to survive than they once were.

- * In 1996, 57 percent of children aged 3 to 5 were read aloud to by a family member, up from 53 percent in 1993.

- * Between 1982 and 1996, average math scores increased for children aged 9, 13 and 17, though reading scores stayed steady or dropped.

End of document

Kids better off, but they face more hazards

Richard Wolf

7/15/1998

USA Today

FINAL; SPECIAL

Page 01D

(Copyright 1998)

Children in America are healthier and better educated than in the past, but they're smoking, drinking and using drugs at an increased pace, says a federal report out today.

The report was compiled by a forum of 18 government agencies tracking the well-being of children in 25 areas, from infant mortality to teen pregnancy. It compares the latest statistics available with previous years.

The findings are mixed. Kids, defined as those under age 18, are healthier, but more lack health insurance. They're having fewer babies, but more newborns have low birth weights. They're committing fewer crimes but using more illegal drugs. They're doing better in math, worse in reading.

"Children's lives, in many ways, are better, especially materially and physically," says Kristin Moore of the private, nonprofit group Child Trends. "But we have some very real challenges in terms of drug use, early sex, smoking, violence."

The report reveals a positive cultural change that has helped cut crime rates and teen pregnancies. More young people are finishing high school and college. Fewer are dropping out without jobs. But poor children, in particular, face a growing lack of adequate food, housing and health care.

The most dramatic finding in the report is good news: High blood lead levels are found in fewer than one in 10 infants and toddlers. That's a reversal from the 1970s, when more than eight in 10 had elevated levels. Officials credit less lead in household paint, plumbing and gasoline.

Other highlights:

- * The number of Hispanic children is rising faster than any other racial or ethnic group, hitting 15% of the total last year.

- * 5% of children have difficulty speaking English; nearly 15% speak another language at home.

- * Child poverty rates are holding steady at 20%.

* Nearly a quarter of kids live only with their mothers; 4% with their fathers; 4% with neither.

* Six in 10 children under 6 receive child care from someone other than their parents.

End of document

Article 15 of 34

ASP9819700587

United States has more Hispanic than black children

LAURA MECKLER

Associated Press

548 Words

3818 Characters

7/15/1998

AP Online

Associated Press

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WASHINGTON (AP) - Their children outnumbering black children for the first time, Hispanics will become the United States' largest minority within seven years, according to the latest Census Bureau figures.

By 2005, the Census Bureau projects that Hispanics will overtake blacks as the largest minority group in the United States, and some predict the balance will tip by the 2000 count. By 2050, there should be more Hispanics than all other minorities combined.

But in 1997, Hispanic children had already surpassed blacks in number - just barely - as birth rates for their Hispanic women fell much more slowly than black birth rates, the government said Tuesday.

That's one of myriad statistics in the government's annual report on the well-being of the nation's children - 69.5 million of them in 1997.

"It brings urgency to the plight of Latino children," Lisa Navarrete of the National Council of La Raza, the nation's largest Hispanic community advocacy group, said of the statistics.

She said the figures show that Latino kids lag behind their white counterparts on a host of measures.

Overall, the news was good: More children were immunized, read aloud to and finished high school. Fewer infants died, fewer kids had lead in their blood and fewer teen-agers were killed.

"There are more indicators that are getting better than are getting worse," said Dr. Duane

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But there was bad news, too: Children who were poor, black or Hispanic did worse on many fronts. There were more low-birthweight babies and more teens smoking and drinking.

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"It's something that has to be taken into account whether you're delivering health services, educational services, social services or whatever," Alexander said.

Meanwhile, the increasing number of Hispanic adults has both Democrats and Republicans courting these new voters.

In school, Hispanics often need help learning English. For health, Hispanics are least likely to get immunizations and most likely to get pregnant.

"We've got to do a better job of reaching that population," Alexander said.

The Hispanic community hopes the changing demographics - though not surprising to people who track the data - will help Americans realize the coming dominance of Latinos and their issues.

"We don't have nearly the awareness level of our community that our numbers would merit," Navarrete said.

The group plans to issue a report next week showing that Hispanics have the lowest levels of educational achievement. Though their numbers have improved somewhat, the gap between Latinos and other groups has remained constant, Navarrete said.

The growing numbers make it even more important that schools pay attention, she said.

"We believe at best (schools) have neglected and at worst failed," she said. "We have to step up to the plate."

End of document

Hispanic Children Outnumber Black Children, U.S. Reports

440 Words

3075 Characters

07/15/1998

Omaha World-Herald

Sunrise

Page 8

(Copyright 1998 Omaha World-Herald Company)

The number of Hispanic children in this country has surpassed the number of black children, the federal government reported Tuesday, signaling the leading edge of a demographic wave that will transform the national profile in the coming decades.

There are 10.5 million Hispanic children under age 18, outnumbering non-Hispanic black children by 35,000. That numerical benchmark constitutes the earliest indicator of a population change that experts have predicted for some time: that Hispanics in the next decade will become the nation's largest minority group.

Since birthrates generally are higher among Hispanic women, the makeover is occurring first among the nation's children, where classrooms and playgrounds in many communities reflect a broad range of languages and cultures.

"Children are experiencing the diversity earlier than we are," said Ken Bryson, senior analyst at the Census Bureau. "People who have children in school may be aware that the school they went to is not the school their children are going to."

In just a generation, the report said, white non-Hispanic children have declined from 74 percent to 66 percent of all children. By 2020, projections show, more than one in five children will be of Hispanic origin.

Also, the number of school-age children who speak a language other than English at home and have difficulty speaking English has doubled since 1979, making up 5 percent of all children in that age group.

The report, "America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being," was released by a consortium of federal agencies and dealt with a range of measures describing the nation's population under 18.

The statistics, from health to economic status and educational achievement, portrayed improvements in some areas and serious problems in others.

Smoking, drinking and alcohol use, for example, has been rising across racial and ethnic groups, not just among older teens but even among those as young as 13. Reading scores are declining among ninth graders. The proportion of poor children without sufficient food increased from 9 percent in 1994 to 15 percent two years later.

But infant mortality is down, immunization rates have improved, teen births have declined and more parents are reading to their children every day.

Among the more dramatic improvements was the decline in the proportion of children with elevated levels of lead in their blood, a condition that can cause behavior problems and lowered intelligence.

In the late 1970s, 88 percent of children aged 5 and under had elevated levels of lead. That figure fell to 6 percent by the late 1980s and early '90s, the result of legislation banning lead in paint and plumbing supplies, and the phase-out of lead in gasoline, the report said.

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07/15/1998

The Star-Ledger Newark, NJ

FINAL

Page 013

(Copyright Newark Morning Ledger Co., 1998)

For the first time, there are more Hispanic children than black children in America, the government said, in a harbinger of things to come for the nation.

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But in 1997, children had already caught up - just barely - as the birth rate for Hispanic women exceeded the rate for blacks.

That's one of a myriad of statistics painting a picture of children in America in the government's annual report on key indicators of the well-being of the nation's children, who numbered 69.5 million in 1997.

Overall, the news is good: More children were immunized, read aloud to and finished high school. Fewer infants died, fewer kids had lead in their blood and fewer teenagers were killed.

But there was bad news, too: Children who were poor, black or Hispanic, did worse on many fronts. There were more low-birthweight babies and more teens smoking and drinking.

Hispanics and blacks each now make up about 15 percent of children, with Hispanics slightly outnumbering blacks.

End of document

Numbers of Hispanics Rising

547 Words

3717 Characters

7/15/1998

AP Online

Associated Press

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Article 22 of 34
BOGL9819600262
NATIONAL/FOREIGN
Progress, setbacks on US children
Larry Tye, Globe Staff
933 Words, 5878 Characters
07/15/1998, The Boston Globe
City Edition, Page A1
(Copyright 1998)

America has made dramatic progress toward ending the public health scourge of lead poisoning in children, federal officials announced yesterday, with just 6 percent of young children now showing unsafe levels of lead in their blood compared to 88 percent two decades ago.

Infant mortality rates also have hit an all-time low, teenagers are having fewer babies, and more black high school students are graduating than in the past, according to the government's annual state-of-our children report released yesterday.

Not all the news was good, however: Smoking is up among young people. So is use of illegal drugs and alcohol. And 800,000 fewer children had health insurance in 1996 than in 1995.

"There are more positives than negatives in our report, but there are some clear warning signs like smoking and drugs," said Dr. Duane Alexander, director of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, one of the agencies that prepared the report.

"And with other indicators, like high school completion and parents reading to their children, things are getting better but they're not as good as they should be."

Yesterday's report, the second of its kind, was modeled on the commonly quoted Index of Leading Economic Indicators and was designed to paint a broad portrait of the well-being of America's 70 million children. To do that, it included the latest data on 29 different measures of health, education, economic security, and social environment.

The data tell a series of dramatic stories of public health successes and failures, but none is more surprising than the one about lead poisoning. From 1976 to 1980, an estimated 88 percent of children ages 1 to 5 had blood lead levels of at least 10 micrograms per deciliter -- a level that specialists say is enough to cause lowered intelligence and behavioral problems. From 1988 to 1994, however, just 6 percent had elevated levels.

"That's an incredible story. . . . It's a dramatic public health gain," said Alexander. "It's a result of legislation that got lead out of paint, out of solder for plumbing and, most important, out of gasoline."

It's also a story that only became apparent a year or two ago, when data from the 1988-1994 national survey was released, Alexander said, and it "has not been widely discussed outside of public health circles" and was not included in last year's state-of-our-children report. What about the trend since 1994? The percent of children with elevated blood levels, Alexander added, "probably is even lower now."

The growing number of teenagers bearing children has been another major worry in recent years. But while birth rates among teenagers 15 to 17 increased substantially from 1986 to 1991, it declined from 39 to 34 births per 1,000 between 1991 and 1996, according to yesterday's report.

The reversal was even more dramatic among black teenagers: They averaged 83 births per 1,000 in 1991, but just 65 in 1996.

On other measures the results were mixed. In 1996, 7.4 percent of infants were born at weights light enough to put them at risk, the highest level reported since the 1970s. But infant

mortality rates have continued to decline. That seeming inconsistency apparently is the result of our doing a better job caring for high-risk infants, said Edward Sondik, director of the National Center for Health Statistics.

Once they get a little older, those infants are more likely than ever to get the recommended childhood vaccines. In 1996, 77 percent of children ages 19 months to 35 months got the vaccines, up 3 percent from 1995 and 8 percent from 1994.

There's also no mistaking the trend with the use of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs. Regular smoking among 12th graders, for instance, was heading down until 1992, but has risen steadily since then. That's the same year use of illicit drugs began heading back, up among that age group, while with drinking, the increase began a year later.

And it's not just older youths who are engaging in the risky behavior. In 1997, 14.5 percent of eighth graders reported having five or more drinks in a row within the previous two weeks, while 13 percent said they had used illegal drugs in the last 30 days. The data for this age group in 1992 were about 13 percent for heavy drinking and 7 percent for illicit drug use.

"Kids are not believing the message that it's dangerous," said Alexander.

The lesson of the areas where progress has been made, as well as those where there has been slippage, is "when we find the right pressure points, the key factors, it seems to make a difference" in changing children's behavior, said Sondik.

Another critical message of yesterday's report, Sondik said, is that there are big gaps in the progress various subgroups of the population have made on the public health measures. Blacks are more likely to suffer continued problems than whites, for instance, and poor children generally are sicker than rich ones, in part because they are less likely to be covered by health insurance. Even with an issue like lead poisoning, where huge progress has been made, poor children face 3 1/2 times the risk of poisoning as rich ones, mainly because their homes are more likely to contain lead-bearing paint and to have paint chips get into areas where they play.

"We're continuing to work on reducing the hazard of lead paint in older housing," said Susanne Martinez, program director at the non-profit Children's Defense Fund. "This report shows that it makes a difference. You can have a really bad problem and you can work at it."

07/15/1998
Denver Post
Rockies
Page A-14
STATS
(Copyright 1998)

WASHINGTON - For the first time, there are more Hispanic children than black children in America, the government said, in a harbinger of things to come for the rest of the nation.

By 2005, the Census Bureau projects Hispanics will overtake blacks as the largest minority group in the United States, and by 2050, there should be more Hispanics than all other minorities combined.

But in 1997, children had already caught up - just barely - as birth rates for Hispanic women exceeded black birth rates.

The government's annual report, to be released today, lists key indicators of the well-being of the nation's children, who numbered 69.5 million in 1997.

Overall, the news was good: More children were immunized, read aloud to and finished high school. Fewer infants died, fewer kids had lead in their blood and fewer teens were killed. The bad news: Children who were poor, black or Hispanic did worse on many fronts. There were more low-birthweight babies and more teens smoking and drinking.

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Latino Children Outnumber Blacks in U.S.

7/15/1998

Los Angeles Times

Home Edition

Page A-5

Wire -- BARBARA VOBEDA

THE WASHINGTON POST

312 Words

2492 Characters

Copyright 1998 / The Times Mirror Company

WASHINGTON -- The number of Latino children in this country has surpassed the number of African American children, the federal government reported Tuesday, signaling the leading edge of a demographic wave that will transform the national profile in coming decades.

There are 10.5 million Latino children under age 18, outnumbering non-Latino black children by 35,000. That numerical benchmark constitutes the earliest indicator of a population change that

experts have predicted for some time: the point seven years from now when Latinos will become the nation's largest minority group.

The trend underscores the racial and ethnic reconfiguration in the United States, as whites steadily decline as a share of the population and communities coast to coast take on a more diverse character.

Since birthrates are generally higher among Latina women, the make-over is occurring first among the nation's children, where classrooms, playgrounds and soccer fields in many communities reflect a broad range of languages and cultures.

In just a generation, the report said, white non-Latino children have declined from 74% to 66% of all children. And by 2020, projections show, more than one in five children will be of Latino origin.

Also, the number of school-age children who speak a language other than English at home and have difficulty speaking English has doubled since 1979, making up 5% of all children in those age groups.

In many communities, these changes are igniting a debate over the merits of bilingual education, particularly in California, where non-Latino whites will no longer be the majority as early as next year. California voters recently rejected the practice of teaching children in both English and their native languages in favor of one year of intensive instruction in English.

The report, "America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being," was released by a consortium of federal agencies and dealt with a range of measures describing the nation's population under 18.

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A SECTION

OTHER NEWS TO NOTE THE NATION

REPORT SAYS HISPANIC KIDS OUTNUMBER BLACK CHILDREN

Associated Press

191 Words

1545 Characters

07/15/1998

Orlando Sentinel

METRO

Page A10

(Copyright 1998)

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But in 1997, children had already caught up.

Hispanics and blacks each now make up about 15 percent of America's 69.5 million children, with Hispanics slightly outnumbering blacks. The Hispanic population is concentrated in a handful of large states, such as Florida, though it is growing across the country.

The statistics are among those in the government's annual report, to be released today, on the well-being of the nation's children.

Overall, the news was good: More children were immunized, and more finished high school. Fewer infants died, fewer kids had lead in their blood and fewer teenagers were killed.

But there was bad news, too: Children who were poor, black or Hispanic did worse on many fronts.

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SEQN: 81960210

End of document

Front

HISPANICS PASS BLACKS IN U.S. POPULATION UNDER AGE 18

The Arizona Republic

Final Chaser

Page A7

Wire -- Barbara Vobejeda, Washington Post

408 Words

2912 Characters

7/15/1998

(Copyright 1998 Phoenix Newspapers, Inc.)

The number of Hispanic children in this country has surpassed the number of African-American children, the federal government reported Tuesday, signaling the leading edge of a demographic wave that will transform the national profile in the coming decades.

There are now 10.5 million Hispanic children younger than 18, outnumbering non-Hispanic Black children by 35,000. That bench mark constitutes the earliest indicator of a population change that experts have predicted for some time - the point seven years from now when Hispanics will become the nation's largest minority group.

The figures underscore the racial and ethnic reconfiguration in this country, as White Americans

steadily decline as a share of the population and communities coast to coast take on a more diverse character.

"Children are experiencing the diversity earlier than we are," said Ken Bryson, senior analyst at the Census Bureau. "People . . . may be aware that the school they went to is not the school their children are going to."

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In many communities, these changes are igniting a debate over the merits of bilingual education, particularly in California, where non-Hispanic Whites will no longer be the majority as early as next year. California voters recently rejected the practice of teaching children in both English and their native languages in favor of one year of intensive instruction in English.

The Census Bureau counts all people as Hispanic who identify themselves as such, even if they also identify themselves as White or Black. If Hispanics who also consider themselves Black were counted as African-American, that group would continue to outnumber Hispanics for another three years, according to projections.

The report, "America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being," was released by a consortium of federal agencies and dealt with a range of measures describing the nation's children.

Among the more dramatic statistics was the decline in the number of children younger than 5 with elevated levels of lead in their blood. The proportion dropped to 6 percent by the late 1980s from 88 percent in the late 1970s.

End of document

NEWS

Hispanic kids outnumber black children, study says U.S. youth healthier, but smoking, drinking on rise

Marna Walthall

Washington Bureau of The Dallas Morning News

1035 Words

6662 Characters

07/15/1998

The Dallas Morning News

HOME FINAL

WASHINGTON - Hispanic children now outnumber black children, a precursor of a shift in the nation's demographic makeup, according to a new federal report on the status of America's kids.

Of America's 69.5 million kids under the age of 18 in 1997, Hispanic children made up 16 percent and black children made up 15 percent, according to the report, the second in an annual series begun by President Clinton to explore the state of the nation's youth.

Within seven years, Hispanics are expected to become the nation's largest minority, a demographic shift that is expected to greatly affect health and education issues.

The report, to be released Wednesday, represents data taken from many federal agencies to form a statistical picture of the youngest Americans. It says that American kids are healthier and doing better in school but that growing numbers are smoking, drinking and using drugs.

The report's most dramatic health finding shows a drop in the number of small children with harmful lead levels in their blood, from 88.2 percent in the years 1976-1980 to 6.2 percent in 1988-1994.

"This is a public-health success story of almost unprecedented magnitude," said Dr. Edward Sondik, director of the National Center for Health Statistics.

Lead in blood can lower IQs and cause behavioral problems in children.

Lead is especially dangerous for young children who are developing speech and motor skills, said Dr. Collin Goto, an assistant professor of pediatrics on staff at Children's Medical Center in Dallas.

Children can get lead in their blood from ingesting contaminated soil or chips of lead-based paint.

Other findings of the report, "America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well Being," include:

- * In 1996 there was a record low infant mortality rate - 7.6 per 1,000 live births.

- * Immunizations of toddlers rose from 69 percent in 1994 to 77 percent in 1996.

- * Teen birth rates are down nationwide, with the biggest drop among black females ages 15 to 19. The overall rate was 54.7 births for every 1,000 female teens, down from the peak of 62.1 births in

1991.

- * A quarter of American high school seniors in 1997 reported smoking on a daily basis. The same number said they had used drugs within the last 30 days. A third of them said they had consumed five drinks or more within a two-week period.

- * In 1996, six out of 10 children were cared for during the day by people other than their parents.

- * The violent-crime rate dropped to 36 crimes per 1,000 juveniles in 1996 from 52 in 1993. The category includes aggravated assault, rape, robbery and homicide.

The new population figures, compiled by the Bureau of the Census, point to an increase in the importance of education and health issues related to Hispanic children.

The report notes that some have problems with learning English and that Hispanic children have higher teen pregnancy rates and lower immunization rates than other ethnic groups.

In 2020, Hispanic kids will make up 20 percent of the youth population, the report estimates.

Separately, the report notes that mortality rates for adolescents ages 15 to 19 went down for the nation but up for blacks from 1980 to 1995. In 1995, 101.7 out of every 100,000 black males died from firearms homicide, compared with 12.3 white males.

Whites smoke more cigarettes than Hispanics or blacks, though minority smoking is rising. In 1997, 27.8 percent of white 12th-graders said they smoked, compared with 7.2 black seniors and 14 percent of Hispanic seniors.

A 1995 survey of Dallas Independent School District high school kids revealed that 69 percent had tried cigarettes and that 20 percent had smoked a whole cigarette before age 13.

Another downside in the national report is that poverty levels of children have hardly changed since 1980. About 20 percent of kids lived below the poverty line in 1996, when the line was defined as an income of \$16,036 for a family of four.

"Texas has pockets of poverty that are the worst in the nation. There are very few states that have higher rates than Texas," said Pam Hormuth, director of Texas Kids Count, an agency that collects and disseminates statistics on children, and a research specialist at the Center for Public Policy Priorities, a think tank that deals with issues involving low-income families.

One of the problems with children in poverty is that much of their well-being is affected by it, Ms. Hormuth said.

"Children in these precarious situations are less likely to be healthy and get the education they need, so the whole thing perpetuates its continuance."

Nearly half of the country's 3- and 4-year-olds were in preschool, nursery schools and Head Start programs in 1996, up from about 30 percent in 1980.

In Dallas, 12.4 percent of all 3- and 4-year-olds are in public pre--kindergarten programs; more are in private ones, Ms. Hormuth said.

Kathi Baker, child-care director for Park South YMCA Child Development Center in South Dallas, said the center's pre-kindergarten program has grown from 20 children to about 50 in six years.

"There is definitely a marked increase for full-time care for young children," she said. "I believe that we see across the board that more families are having to work instead of being with children."

Although children are increasingly being cared for by people other than their families, they are still getting some parental perks: In 1995, 57 percent of kids ages 3 to 5 were read to by relatives on a daily basis.

Reading abilities of older children have not changed much since 1980. But math scores have gone up, for girls and boys, and more kids are graduating from college.

The graduation rates among black high school students has increased more than any other ethnic group, from 75 percent in 1980 to 83 percent in 1996.

Not many more black high school graduates ages 25 to 29 had college degrees in 1997, compared with 1980. But 18 percent of Hispanic youths in 1997 had earned college degrees, compared with 13 percent in 1980. Thirty-five percent of white high school graduates had degrees in 1997, compared with 28 percent in 1980.

Staff writer Vikas Bajaj in Dallas contributed to this report.

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Hispanic children surpass number of black children

Houston Chronicle

3 STAR

Page 2

Wire -- BARBARA VOBEDA

Washington Post

684 Words

4634 Characters

07/15/1998

WASHINGTON - The number of Hispanic children in this country has surpassed the number of African-American children, the federal government reported Tuesday, signalling the leading edge of a demographic wave that will transform the national profile in the coming decades.

There are now 10.5 million Hispanic children younger than 18, outnumbering non-Hispanic black children by 35,000. That numerical benchmark constitutes the earliest indicator of a population change that experts have predicted for some time - the point seven years from now when Hispanics will become the nation's largest minority group.

Taken together, the trend lines underscore the racial and ethnic reconfiguration in this country, as white Americans steadily decline as a share of the population and communities coast to coast take on a more diverse character.

Since birth rates are generally higher among Hispanic women, the makeover is occurring first among the nation's children, where classrooms and playgrounds and soccer fields in many communities reflect a broad range of languages and cultures.

"Children are experiencing the diversity earlier than we are," said Ken Bryson, senior analyst at the Census Bureau. "People who have children in school may be aware that the school they went to is not the school their children are going to."

In just a generation, the report said, white non-Hispanic children have declined from 74 percent to 66 percent of all children. And by 2020, projections indicate, more than one in five children will be of Hispanic origin.

Also, the number of school-age children who speak a language other than English at home and have difficulty speaking English has doubled since 1979, making up 5 percent of all children in those age groups.

In many communities, these changes are igniting a debate over the merits of bilingual education, particularly in California, where non-Hispanic whites will no longer be the majority as early as next year. California voters recently rejected the practice of teaching children in both English and their native languages in favor of one year of intensive instruction in English.

The report, "America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being," was released by a consortium of federal agencies and dealt with a range of measures describing the nation's population younger than 18.

The statistics, from health to economic status and educational achievement, portrayed improvements in some areas and serious problems in others.

Smoking, drinking and alcohol use, for example, has been rising across racial and ethnic groups, not just among older teens but even those as young as 13. Reading scores are declining among

ninth graders. The proportion of poor children without sufficient food increased from 9 percent in 1994 to 15 percent two years later.

But infant mortality is down, immunization rates have improved, teen births have declined and more parents are reading to their children every day.

Among the more dramatic improvements was the decline in the proportion of children with elevated levels of lead in their blood, a condition that can cause behavior problems and lowered intelligence.

In the late 1970s, 88 percent of children ages 5 and younger had elevated levels of lead. That figure fell to 6 percent by the late 1980s and early '90s, the result of legislation banning lead in paint and plumbing supplies, and the phase-out of lead in gasoline, the report said.

"That's an enormous public health accomplishment, and it came about by specific legislation," said Duane Alexander, director of the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development.

Undergirding all of the other statistics are the demographic changes.

The Census bureau counts anyone as Hispanic who identifies themselves as such, even if they also identify themselves as white or black. If Hispanics who also consider themselves black were counted as African American, that group would continue to outnumber Hispanics for another three years, according to projections.

The growth in the number of Hispanic children, said Harry Pachon, president of the Tomas Rivera Policy Institute, a California research group, "is a good indicator that, as the turn of the century approaches, we're going to have to seriously grapple with the issue of moving from a biracial to a multi-ethnic society."

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Article 32 of 34

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NEWS

U.S. children becoming healthier despite spread of bad habits, study says
Smoking, drinking, drug use increase, but lead levels decline dramatically

Marna Walthall

Washington Bureau of The Dallas Morning News

933 Words

6049 Characters

07/15/1998

The Dallas Morning News

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WASHINGTON - American kids are growing healthier and smarter, but more are smoking, drinking and using drugs, according to a new federal report on the well-being of the nation's children.

The report is the second in an annual series begun by President Clinton to explore the state of the nation's youth. It represents data taken from many federal agencies that together form a statistical picture of the youngest Americans.

Among highlights, the report found that for the first time, there are more Hispanic children than black children in America - a harbinger of things to come for the rest of the nation.

Another significant finding shows a drop in the number of small children with harmful lead levels in their blood, from 82 percent in the years 1976-80 to 6.2 percent in 1988-94.

"This is a public health success story of almost unprecedented magnitude," said Dr. Edward Sondik, director of the National Center for Health Statistics.

Lead in blood can lower IQs and cause behavior problems in children. Lead is especially dangerous for young children who are developing speech and motor skills, said Dr. Collin Goto, an assistant professor of pediatrics on staff at the Children's Medical Center in Dallas.

The report is to be released Wednesday. In it, other health indicators for the nation's children, who numbered 69.5 million in 1997, were also positive.

- * In 1996, there was a record low infant mortality rate - 7.6 per 1,000 live births.
- * Immunizations of toddlers rose from 69 percent in 1994 to 77 percent in 1996.
- * Teen birth rates are down nationwide, with the biggest drop among black females ages 15 to 19. The overall rate was 54.7 births for every 1,000 female teens, down from the 62.1 births peak in 1991.

According to the demographic data in the report, Hispanics and blacks make up about 15 percent each of American children, with Hispanics slightly outnumbering blacks. The Hispanic population is concentrated in a handful of large states, though it is growing across the country.

By 2005, the Census Bureau projects that Hispanics will overtake blacks as the largest minority group in the United States, and by 2050, there should be more Hispanics than all other minorities combined.

The report, "America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well Being," does contain some disappointing medical news.

Increasing numbers of teens are smoking, drinking and using drugs. The numbers are not as high as they were in the early 1980s, but they are going back up after a downturn in the early '90s.

A quarter of American high school seniors in 1997 reported smoking on a daily basis. The same number had used drugs within 30 days. A third of them said they drank heavily within a two-week period.

A 1995 survey of Dallas Independent School District high school kids revealed that 69 percent had tried cigarette smoking and 20 percent had smoked a whole cigarette before age 13. A Texas-wide study showed a 25 percent increase in smoking among eighth- and 10th-graders from 1991 to 1996.

Another downside of the national report is that poverty levels of children have hardly changed since 1980. About 20 percent of kids lived below the poverty line in 1996 when the line was defined as an income of \$16,036 for a family of four.

In Texas, the child poverty rates have increased, according to a report released last week.

"Texas has pockets of poverty that are the worst in the nation. There are very few states that have higher rates than Texas," said Pam Hormuth, director of Texas Kids Count, an agency that collects and disseminates statistics on children, and a research specialist at the Center for Public Policy Priorities, a think tank that deals with issues involving low-income families.

One of the problems with children in poverty is that much of their well-being is affected by it, Ms. Hormuth said.

"Children in these precarious situations are less likely to be healthy and get the education they need, so the whole thing perpetuates its continuance."

Overall, six out of 10 of America's youngest children are cared for during the day by someone other than their parents, and increasing numbers of them are enrolled in pre-school programs.

Nearly half of the country's children ages 3-4 were in preschool, nursery schools and Head Start programs in 1996, up from about 30 percent in 1980.

In Dallas, 12.4 percent of all 3- and 4-year-olds are in public pre-kindergarten programs; more are in private ones, Ms. Hormuth said.

Kathi Baker, child-care director for Park South YMCA Child Development Center in South Dallas, said the center's pre-kindergarten program has grown from 20 children to about 50 in six years.

"There is definitely a marked increase for full-time care for young children. I believe that we see across the board that more families are having to work instead of being with children," she said.

Although children are increasingly being cared for by people other than their families, they are still getting some parental perks. In 1995, 57 percent of kids ages 3-5 were read to by relatives on a daily basis.

Reading abilities of older children have not changed much since 1980. But math scores have gone up, for girls and boys, and more kids are graduating from college.

Along with educational abilities, some aspects of teen behavior have improved. The violent crime rate dropped to 36 crimes per 1,000 juveniles in 1996 from 52 in 1993. Serious crimes include aggravated assault, rape, robbery and homicide.

Staff writer Vikas Bajaj in Dallas and The Associated Press contributed to this report.
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Article 33 of 34

WP9819600037

A Section

Hispanic Youths Outnumber Blacks; Federal Report Reveals Crest of Wave That Will Reshape U.S. Demographic Mosaic

Barbara Vobejda

Washington Post Staff Writer

759 Words

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The Washington Post

FINAL, Page A02

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The number of Hispanic children in this country has surpassed the number of African American children, the federal government reported yesterday, signaling the leading edge of a demographic wave that will transform the national profile in the coming decades.

There are now 10.5 million Hispanic children under age 18, outnumbering non-Hispanic black children by 35,000. That numerical benchmark constitutes the earliest indicator of a population change that experts have predicted for some time -- the point seven years from now when Hispanics will become the nation's largest minority group.

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Also, the number of school-age children who speak a language other than English at home and have difficulty speaking English has doubled since 1979, making up 5 percent of all children in those age groups.

In many communities, these changes are igniting a debate over the merits of bilingual education, particularly in California, where non-Hispanic whites will no longer be the majority as early as next year. In an initiative that could trigger similar efforts elsewhere, California voters recently rejected the practice of teaching children in English and their native languages in favor of a year of intensive instruction in English.

The report, "America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being," was released by a consortium of federal agencies and dealt with a range of measures describing the nation's population under 18.

The statistics, from health to economic status and educational achievement, portrayed improvements in some areas and serious problems in others.

Smoking, drinking and drug use, for example, have been rising across racial and ethnic groups, not just among older teens but even those as young as 13. Reading scores are declining among ninth graders. And the proportion of poor children without sufficient food increased from 9 percent in 1994 to 15 percent two years later.

But at the same time, infant mortality is down, immunization rates have improved, teen births have declined and more parents are reading to their children every day.

Among the more dramatic improvements was the decline in the proportion of children with elevated levels of lead in their blood, a condition that can cause behavior problems and lowered intelligence.

In the late 1970s, 88 percent of children age 5 and under had elevated levels of lead. But that figure fell to just 6 percent by the late 1980s and early '90s, the result of legislation banning lead in paint and plumbing supplies, and the phaseout of lead in gasoline, the report said.

"That's an enormous public health accomplishment, and it came about by specific legislation," said Duane Alexander, director of the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development.

Undergirding all of the other statistics are the demographic changes recasting the population of children.

The Census Bureau counts anyone as Hispanic who identifies themselves as such, even if they also identify themselves as white or black. If Hispanics who also consider themselves black were counted as African American, that group would continue to outnumber Hispanics for another three years, according to projections.

The growth in the number of Hispanic children, said Harry Pachon, president of the Tomas Rivera Policy Institute, a California research group, "is a good indicator that, as the turn of the century approaches, we're going to have to seriously grapple with the issue of moving from a biracial to a multiethnic society.

"The sad thing is that we don't turn that indicator into a positive," he said. "If 30 percent [of Hispanic children] are having difficulty speaking English, that means there is proficiency in speaking Spanish. What we have in our own back yard is a population that can serve as an economic resource." <http://www.washingtonpost.com>

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

July 15, 1998

**STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT
ON THE RELEASE OF
"AMERICA'S CHILDREN: KEY NATIONAL INDICATORS OF WELL-BEING"**

Today, my Administration released an important report card on our nation's children, "America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being." Last year, I called for this yearly report to provide the American people with a portrait of our children in critical areas such as health, education, and economic security.

In this second annual report, we find much to be grateful for -- infant mortality is at an all-time low; the number of children with high blood lead levels, which can cause IQ or behavioral problems, has declined dramatically; more toddlers are up-to-date on their immunizations; more children are entering preschool, improving in math, and moving on to graduate from college; teen pregnancy has decreased; and a majority of parents are reporting that their children are in very good or excellent health. These strides reflect strategic investments in our nation's children, which have always been central to my agenda to prepare America for the twenty-first Century.

The report released today also demonstrates that we must now commit ourselves to making further progress for our children. Unfortunately, substance abuse and cigarette smoking among children are at unacceptable levels; reading scores are stagnant; and too many of our nation's children live in poverty.

We have demonstrated that we can work on a bipartisan basis to address the challenges our children face. That's why, as I said yesterday, I am extremely disappointed that some in Congress have taken actions that threaten to undermine the important progress we have made by failing to provide critical investments for our young people. Our children deserve progress, not partisanship. As we pause to consider this report card on our children, I urge Members of Congress to work together to build a stronger future for our nation's children.

Congress exempts grain exports from sanctions imposed on Pakistan, India By Stephen J. Hedges Chicago Tribune (KRT)

WASHINGTON Faced with the prospect of scuttling a major wheat sale, Congress moved with uncharacteristic speed Tuesday to exempt federally backed grain exports from sanctions imposed against Pakistan and India in May after both tested nuclear devices.

The measure passed on the eve of a tender offer by Pakistan for 350,000 metric tons of white wheat, which is produced mostly in western states. Pakistan will use \$38 million in Department of Agriculture loan guarantees to make the purchase.

Spurred by a Wednesday deadline set by Pakistan for bids on the grain sale, the House approved the exemption bill on a unanimous voice vote Tuesday afternoon. The Senate, which had approved the exemptions 98-0 last week, then signed off on the House's changes and forwarded the bill to the White House for President Clinton's signature. The president has already expressed his support for the measure.

The quick action reflected growing sentiment among lawmakers against economic sanctions which may hurt sales of U.S. products abroad while having little effect on the countries that the sanctions are intended to punish.

Had Congress not acted, Pakistan would likely have turned to Australia or France to buy wheat, supporters of the measure said. The bill was also pitched as mid-summer relief for wheat farmers, who are suffering from low prices. Pakistan, for instance, will be paying about \$2.50 a bushel for U.S. white wheat, compared to the \$5- to \$6-a-bushel it paid last year.

"I think the deadline spurred everyone on," said the bill's sponsor, Rep. George Nethercutt, R-Wash. "This will be a big relief to the farmers. I was just home and they were all saying, 'We just have to have the Pakistan market.'"

The bill will also exempt federally backed sales of feed grain, breeder stock, peas and lentils and wood pulp, though an Agriculture Department spokesman said Pakistan's main U.S. import is wheat. It received \$250 million in U.S. agricultural loan credits for wheat purchases for 1998.

India doesn't use U.S. guarantees to buy wheat, but India does buy U.S. peas and lentils, importing 59 metric tons worth \$2.1 million last year. That's 8 percent of the U.S. market.

While a triumph for farmers, the exemptions raise questions about congressional and administration resolve for meaningful sanctions against India and Pakistan. Already, the administration is pressing Congress for authority to waive elements of the sanctions, arguing that such a move will give the president negotiating leverage with international outcast states.

And in Congress, there was immediate pressure to exempt financial aid to both countries by U.S. Export-Import Bank and the Overseas Private Investment Corp. which both promote U.S. business overseas. Under the sanctions, those government loan programs already under way in India and Pakistan will continue, while future financial support has been suspended.

Nuclear proliferation experts have complained that the sanctions in place against India and Pakistan are not stiff enough to convince either nation to curb its nuclear ambitions. And the experts say the administration has been less-than-enthusiastic in putting the restrictions in place.

"The administration's idea is apparently to do as little as the law allows," said once congressional aide involved in the sanctions. "It's the same old approach influence people by trying to be nice to them."

The sanctions, imposed immediately after India and Pakistan announced their nuclear tests, were mandatory under a provision of the Arms Control Disarmament Act. They make it illegal to sell both nations a variety of military and technological items and halted loans to Indian government institutions.

They do, however, allow the trade of clothing, food, automobile and other durable goods. And, significantly, the sanctions allow India and Pakistan to borrow from U.S. banks to import American foodstuffs.

Once the sanctions were in place, however, the Justice Department ruled that they would bar the use of Department of Agriculture loan guarantees. Those guarantees are essentially insurance on bank financing that foreign countries secure to buy U.S. products. If the purchasing country defaults on its export loan, the U.S. government pays 98 percent of the loss.

There was virtually no opposition to the bid to exempt the export guarantees from the sanctions. Even those who have accused the administration of trying to soften the sanctions said the export

guarantees were similar to allowing foreign countries to acquire U.S. private loans for food.

Pakistan has not defaulted on U.S.-backed exports, and it is a sizable customer, importing 2.2 million metric tons of wheat last year. Its purchases make up 40 percent of America's overseas sales of white wheat.

Several lawmakers noted Tuesday that the sales could provide a needed boost to the wheat market, which is depressed by poor growing conditions in some parts of the country, overproduction in other areas and a slacking overseas market.

"We are absolutely ravished by the twin disasters of very difficult times of producing a crop and then a horribly indecent price once you get a few bushels to market," Rep. Earl Pomeroy, D-N.D., told the House. "We must act and act now."

Mirroring larger trend, Hispanic children outnumber black children, study reports By Marna Walthall The Dallas Morning News (KRT)

WASHINGTON Hispanic children now outnumber black children, a precursor of a shift in the nation's demographic makeup, according to a new federal report on the status of America's kids.

Of America's 69.5 million kids under the age of 18 in 1997, Hispanic children made up 16 percent, and black children made up 15 percent, said the report, the second in an annual series begun by President Clinton to explore the state of the nation's youth.

Within seven years, Hispanics are expected to become the nation's largest minority, a demographic shift that is expected to greatly affect health and education issues.

The report, to be released Wednesday, represents data taken from many federal agencies that together form a statistical picture of the youngest Americans. It says American kids are healthier and doing better in school, but growing numbers are smoking, drinking and using drugs.

The report's most dramatic health finding shows a drop in the number of small children with harmful lead levels in their blood, from 82 percent in the years 1976-1980 to 6.2 percent in 1988-1994.

"This is a public health success story of almost unprecedented magnitude," said Dr. Edward Sondik, director of the National Center for Health Statistics.

Lead in blood can lower IQs and cause behavior problems in children. Lead is especially dangerous for young children who are developing speech and motor skills, said Dr. Collin Goto, an assistant professor of pediatrics on staff at the Childrens Medical Center in Dallas.

Children can get lead in their blood from ingesting contaminated soil or chips of lead-based paint.

Other findings of the report, "America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well Being," include:

In 1996 there was a record low infant mortality rate 7.6 per 1,000 live births.

Immunizations of toddlers rose from 69 percent in 1994 to 77 percent in 1996.

Teen birth rates are down nationwide, with a biggest drop among black females ages 15 to 19. The overall rate was 54.7 births for every 1,000 female teens, down from the 62.1 births peak in 1991.

A quarter of American high school seniors in 1997 reported smoking on a daily basis. The same number had used drugs within 30 days. A third of them said they had consumed five drinks or more within a two-week period.

In 1996, six out of 10 children were cared for during the day by people other than their parents.

The violent crime rate dropped to 36 crimes per 1,000 juveniles in 1996 from 52 in 1993. The category includes aggravated assault, rape, robbery and homicide.

The new population figures, compiled by the Bureau of the Census, point to an increase in the importance of education and health issues related to Hispanic children. The report notes that some have problems with learning English and that Hispanic children have higher teen pregnancy rates and lower immunization rates than other ethnic groups.

In 2020, Hispanic kids will make up 20 percent of the youth population, the report estimates.

Separately, the report notes that mortality rates for adolescents ages 15 to 19 went down for the nation, but up for blacks from 1980 to

1995. In 1995 101.7 out of every 100,000 black males died from firearms homicide, compared with 12.3 white males.

Whites smoke more cigarettes than either Hispanics or blacks, though minority smoking is rising. In 1997 27.8 percent of white 12th graders said they smoked, compared with 7.2 black seniors and 14 percent of Hispanic seniors.

Another downside in the national report is that poverty levels of children have hardly changed since 1980. Roughly 20 percent of kids lived below the poverty line in 1996, when the line was defined as an income of \$16,036 for a family of four.

Nearly half of the country's children ages 3 to 4 were in preschool, nursery schools and Head Start programs in 1996, up from about 30 percent in 1980.

Though children are increasingly being cared for by people other than their families, they are still getting some parental perks: In 1995 57 percent of kids ages 3-5 were read to by relatives on a daily basis.

Reading abilities of older children have not changed much since 1980. But math scores have gone up, for girls and boys, and more kids are graduating from college.

The graduation rates among black high school students has increased more than any other ethnic group, from 75 percent in 1980 to 83 percent in 1996.

Not many more black high school graduates ages 25 to 29 had college degrees in 1997 compared with 1980. But 18 percent of Hispanic youths in 1997 had earned their college diplomas, compared to 13 percent in 1980. Thirty-five percent of white high school graduates had degrees in 1997 compared to 28 percent in 1980.

Justice Department wants to expand breadth of hate crimes law **By David Jackson The Dallas Morning News (KRT)**

WASHINGTON When it comes to federal hate crimes, hate is not enough.

Federal law also says victims must be engaged in a "federally protected activity" such as voting or seeking a job a requirement the Justice Department is seeking to remove in the wake of the Texas dragging death of James Byrd Jr.

Byrd's death probably is not a hate crime as defined by federal law because he was only walking along the road when abducted, Justice Department officials said.

Attorney General Janet Reno is expected to call for removal of the activities requirement during an oversight hearing Wednesday before the Senate Judiciary Committee. Reno also wants to expand the hate crimes law to cover violence based on gender, physical disability and sexual orientation.

"Hate crimes are the most visible sign that the promise of equality made by our Constitution is not yet a reality," the attorney general said recently.

Few people oppose prosecution of hate crimes. But opponents of the federal law point out that local authorities can and do pursue these types of crimes, including the killing of Byrd, mostly under state murder and aggravated assault laws. Three white men face state murder charges in the June 7 killing of Byrd, who was black.

Critics of the proposed Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 1998 said the measure would make thousands of street crimes from rapes to simple assaults subject to federal authority. In other words, they said, state and local prosecutors would keep responsibility for these crimes, but federal prosecutors would have the power to step in on their whim.

"That's basically unaccountable power," said William Stuntz, who teaches law at the University of Virginia. "The more power you give them, the more cases you give them, the more they're allowed to run around and cherry-pick and go after whoever they want to go after."

The Senate Judiciary Committee held a hate crimes hearing last week. The House Judiciary Committee is scheduled to take testimony July 22. Members of the Republican majority in both chambers have questioned the breadth of the proposed expansion of hate crimes law.

Deputy Attorney General Eric Holder, testifying before the Senate, said the Justice Department only wants to "backstop" state and local prosecutors, especially those unable or unwilling to go after these types of crimes.

Holder said the changes would create a modest increase in federal hate crime prosecutions, which he said numbered 33 in the years 1992-97.

"The bill is a thoughtful, measured response to a critical problem facing our nation," Holder said.

In the most recent statistics, the FBI reported nearly 9,000 bias

crimes in 1996.

The existing hate crimes law is really a set of federal civil rights statutes that date back to Reconstruction. Essentially, it is a federal crime to assault people because of their "race, color, religion or national origin."

The six federally protected activities include attending a public school, using a government service or program, applying for a job, serving as a juror, using a facility of interstate commerce or enjoying a public accommodation.

Reno and other Justice Department officials said these requirements create absurdities. For example, the Justice Department can prosecute a hate crime if it occurs on a school parking lot, but not if it happens across the street in somebody's back yard.

Even when the federal government opts to prosecute, the requirements have created problems in trials. Jurors in Fort Worth cited the absence of a federally protected activity in acquitting three white supremacists in 1994.

Justice Department officials also note a number of crimes targeting women, gays and lesbians, and people with disabilities, particularly AIDS. The proposed expansion of the hate crimes law would cover those crimes as well.

Some analysts wonder whether the federal judiciary would strike down the law as an encroachment on states. In 1995, the Supreme Court struck down a federal law requiring gun-free zones around schools. Larry Alexander, a professor at the University of San Diego, predicted

a similar fate for expanded federal prosecutions of hate crimes.

Chai Feldblum, a law professor at Georgetown University, said the Constitution gives the federal government wide latitude to go after what are basically civil rights cases.

Said Feldblum: "Hate often knows no boundaries."

Hispanic Y uths Outnumber Blacks

Federal Report Reveals Crest of Wave That Will Reshape U.S. Demographic Mosaic

By BARBARA VOBEDA
Washington Post Staff Writer

The number of Hispanic children in this country has surpassed the number of African American children, the federal government reported yesterday, signaling the leading edge of a demographic wave that will transform the national profile in the coming decades.

There are now 10.5 million His-

panic children under age 18, outnumbering non-Hispanic black children by 35,000. That numerical benchmark constitutes the earliest indicator of a population change that experts have predicted for some time—the point seven years from now when Hispanics will become the nation's largest minority group.

Taken together, the trend lines underscore the racial and ethnic reconfiguration that is quickly becoming apparent in this country, as white Americans steadily decline as a share of the population and communities coast to coast take on a much more diverse character.

Since birth rates are generally higher among Hispanic women, the makeover is occurring first among the nation's children, where classrooms and playgrounds and soccer fields in many communities now reflect a broad range of languages and cultures.

"Children are experiencing the diversity earlier than we are," said Ken Bryson, senior analyst at the Census Bureau. "People who have children in school may be aware that the school they went to is not the school their children are going to."

In just a generation, the report said, white non-Hispanic children have declined from 74 percent to 66 percent of all children. And by 2020, projections show, more than one in five children will be of Hispanic origin.

Also, the number of school-age children who speak a language other

than English at home and have difficulty speaking English has doubled since 1979, making up 5 percent of all children in those age groups.

In many communities, these changes are igniting a debate over

"Children are experiencing the diversity earlier than we [adults] are."

— Ken Bryson,
Census Bureau senior analyst

the merits of bilingual education, particularly in California, where non-Hispanic whites will no longer be the majority as early as next year. In an initiative that could trigger similar efforts elsewhere, California voters recently rejected the practice of teaching children in both English and their native languages in favor of one year of intensive instruction in English.

The report, "America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being," was released by a consortium of federal agencies and dealt with a range of measures describing the nation's population under 18.

The statistics, from health to economic status and educational achievement, portrayed improvements in some areas and serious problems in others.

Smoking and alcohol use, for example, have been rising across racial and ethnic groups, not just among older teens but even those as young as 13. Reading scores are declining among ninth graders. And the proportion of poor children without sufficient food increased from 9 percent in 1994 to 15 percent two years later.

But at the same time, infant mortality is down, immunization rates have improved, teen births have declined and more parents are reading to their children every day.

Among the more dramatic improvements was the decline in the proportion of children with elevated levels of lead in their blood, a condition that can cause behavior problems and lowered intelligence.

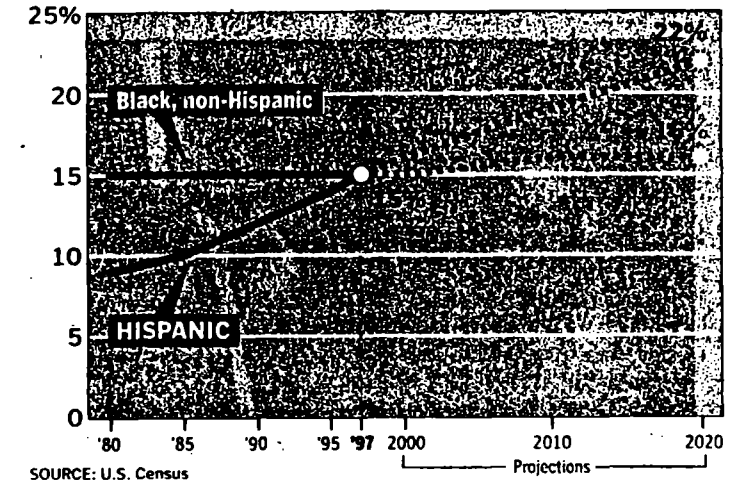
In the late 1970s, 88 percent of children age 5 and under had elevated levels of lead. But that figure fell to just 6 percent by the late 1980s and early '90s, the result of legislation banning lead in paint and plumbing supplies, and the phase-out of lead in gasoline, the report said.

"That's an enormous public health accomplishment, and it came about by specific legislation," said Duane Alexander, director of the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development.

A Demographic Milestone

Hispanic children in the United States now number 10.5 million, exceeding African American children by 35,000.

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN (younger than 18)



Undergirding all of the other statistics are the demographic changes recasting the population of children.

The Census Bureau counts anyone as Hispanic who identifies themselves as such, even if they also identify themselves as white or black. If Hispanics who also consider themselves black were counted as African American, that group would continue to outnumber Hispanics for another three years, according to projections.

The growth in the number of Hispanic children, said Harry Pachon, president of the Tomas Rivera Policy Institute, a California research group, "is a good indicator that, as the turn of the century

approaches, we're going to have to seriously grapple with the issue of moving from a biracial to a multi-ethnic society.

"The sad thing is that we don't turn that indicator into a positive," he said. "If 30 percent [of Hispanic children] are having difficulty speaking English, that means there is proficiency in speaking Spanish. What we have in our own back yard is a population that can serve as an economic resource."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To read more Post coverage about race and diversity, click on the above symbol on the front page of the Post's Web site at www.washingtonpost.com

CORRECTIONS

A headline on the front of yesterday's Health section mentioned an article on pedestrian safety that was inadvertently omitted from the paper. That story will run next Tuesday in the Health section.

Legislation sponsored by Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) specifies that schools and libraries receiving federal funds for Internet connections must use special software that blocks or filters material deemed inappropriate for children. An article in yesterday's Business section incorrectly reported details of the bill.

Memorial Nearing Completion

Statue Honoring Black Civil War Soldiers to Arrive Tomorrow

By LINDA WHEELER
Washington Post Staff Writer

Frank Smith Jr. put his foot up on a freshly cured concrete pedestal yesterday, confident that it would be clad in granite and crowned with a nine-foot-tall bronze statue honoring black Civil War soldiers by tomorrow. The chairman of the African-American Civil War Memorial Freedom Foundation and Democratic D.C. Council member from Ward 1 grinned.

"I am happy," he said. "Yes, I am. We have waited a long time for this."

The memorial, seven years in the planning, will be the first in the country to honor all the African American Union troops and their white officers. For most of the time since the war ended in 1865, the

black contribution to the North's victory was forgotten or ignored. The memorial is part of a new recognition of the role played by African Americans, both freed men

"I am happy. Yes, I am. We have waited a long time for this."

— Frank Smith Jr.,
D.C. Council member

and slaves, who volunteered for service.

The National Park Service eventually will be in charge of the \$2.6 million monument, built in a small

federal park in the Shaw neighborhood.

The foundation is doing the privately financed project in partnership with the District government, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, the National Park Service and the National Archives.

The statue, named the Spirit of Freedom, was designed by sculptor Ed Hamilton, of Louisville. The semi-circular work depicts soldiers from various armed services on the outer side and a supportive family as the inner circle. It is scheduled to arrive at the U Street and Vermont Avenue NW park at noon tomorrow.

Smith said reenactors from the Massachusetts 54th, the regiment made famous by the movie "Glory," will be on hand to welcome the statue.

Although a major part of the

memorial—curved walls listing the more than 200,000 names of the black soldiers and their white officers—won't be in place for the Saturday dedication, Smith said the two-toned plaza and extensive landscaping will be ready. The memorial already has had one groundbreaking and two site dedications because other deadlines to finish the monument were missed.

Last week, a foundation spokeswoman said the group had just learned that the curved granite walls that will hold the plaques won't arrive until next month. Gary Burch, a Department of Pub-

lic Works official in charge of the contract for the stone walls, said this week that the order was placed too late to meet the deadline.

"The architect made legitimate changes in the dimensions," he said. "I don't want to present that as unnecessary. The dimensions had to change along with some redesigning."

Burch said some of the stone was to have a curved and sloped front, a shape difficult to fabricate. He said the company needed eight weeks to do the work and has scheduled delivery for mid-August.

At the foundation's small office

down the street from the site, project director Lyndia Grant-Briggs patiently explained to a caller the basics of staging a memorial dedication. The date—Saturday—is the only sure thing. The weather is an unknown. The list of speakers was not complete.

"I will send you a speakers list, but it's going to change. It always does," she said, as a dozen volunteers swirled around her, stacking brochures, reading computer screens and answering phones. "If we get good publicity, people will decide to accept. We won't know until the night before."

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