

Child Well-Being
Indicators

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

1997

Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics

Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics

The Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics was founded in 1994 to foster the coordination and collaboration of the collection and reporting of federal data on children and families. Members of the Forum as of Spring 1997 are listed below.

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Michael Stegman, Assistant Secretary

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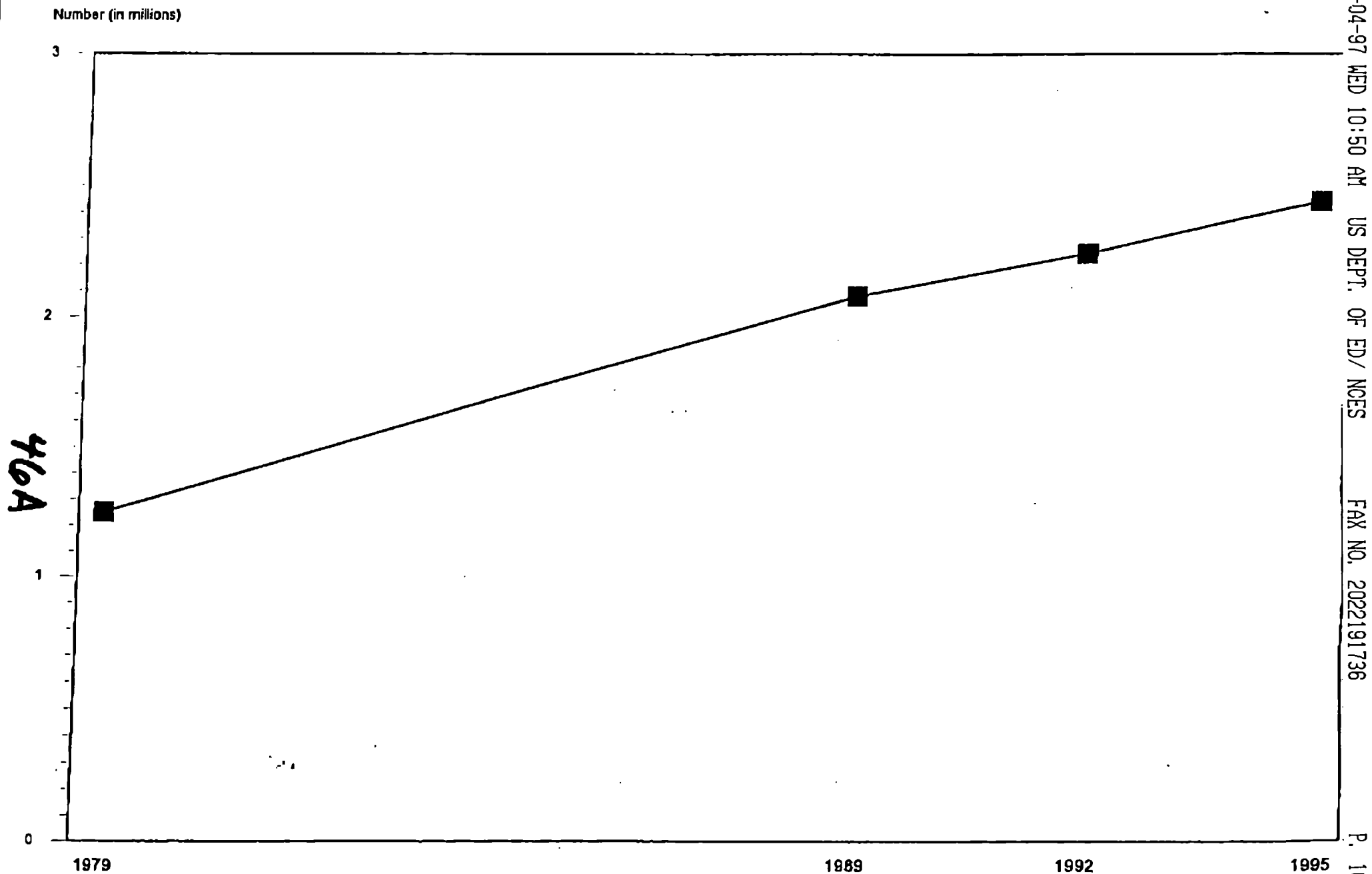
ED7 Percentage of high school graduates ages 25-29 who have completed a bachelor's degree or higher by race and Hispanic origin, selected years 1980-96

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SPECIAL1 Rates of child abuse and neglect, 1993

EDUCATION

Figure ED1 Number of children ages 5-17 who speak a language other than English at home and who have difficulty speaking English, selected years 1979-95



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, November Current Population Surveys. Tabulated by U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Health Statistics. See related Table ED1, this publication.

DIFFICULTY SPEAKING ENGLISH

Children who speak languages other than English at home and have difficulty speaking English⁴² may face greater challenges progressing in school and in the labor market. They may need special instruction in school to improve their English. Difficulty speaking English is most common among immigrant children and the U.S.-born children of immigrants. In the last three decades, the great majority of immigrants to the U.S. have come from Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

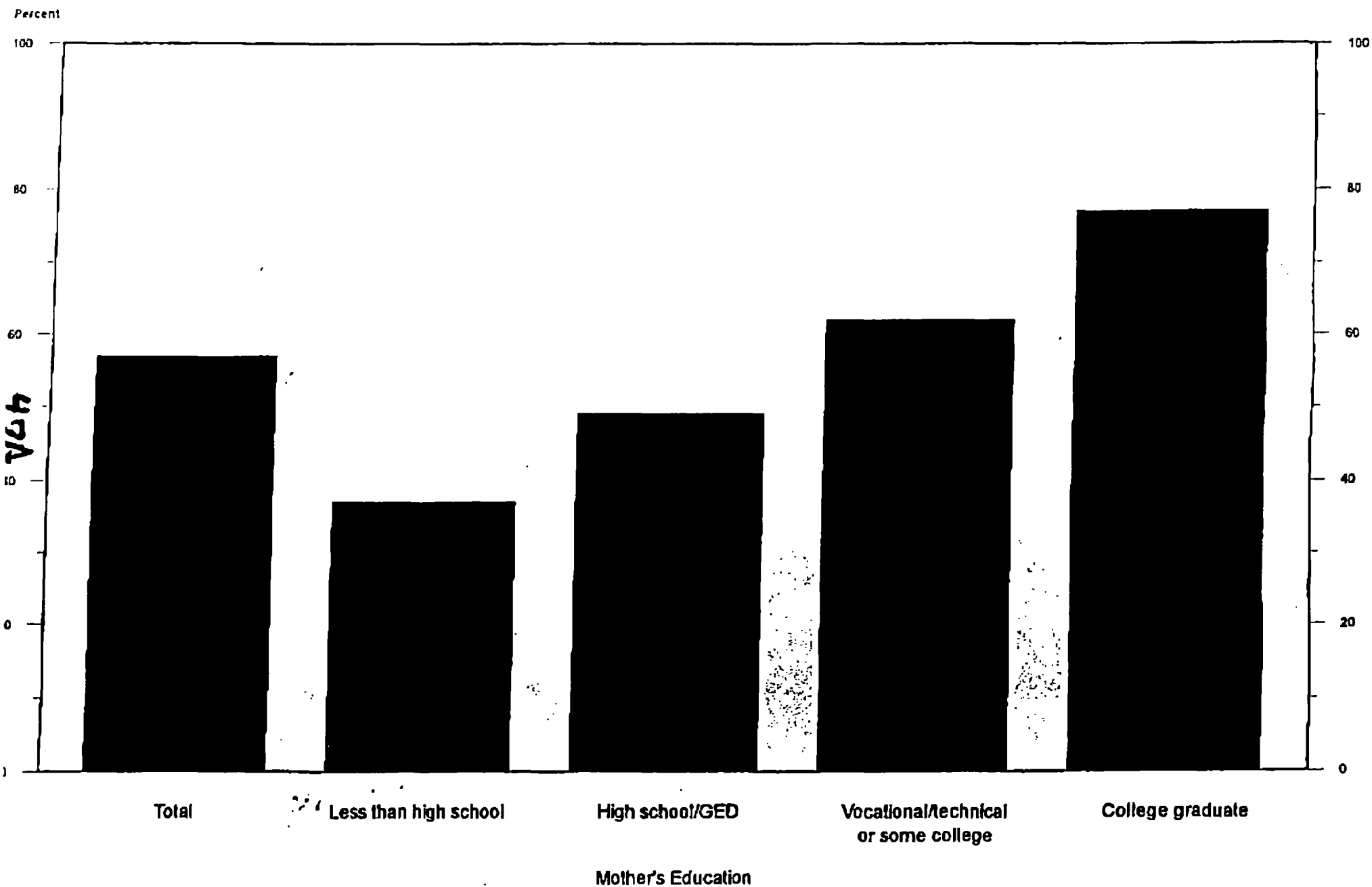
- From 1979 to 1995, the number of school-age children who spoke a language other than English at home and had difficulty speaking English almost doubled, increasing from 1.25 million in 1979 to 2.44 million in 1995.
- As a percentage of all children ages 5-17 in the U.S., this is an increase from 3 percent in 1979 to 5 percent in 1995.
- Underlying the increase in the percentage of all children who have difficulty speaking English was an increase in the percentage of children who spoke another language at home, from 9 percent in 1979 to 14 percent in 1995, and in the proportion of those children who had difficulty speaking English, from 33 percent in 1979 to 37 percent in 1995.
- Children of Hispanic and Asian origin are more likely than white or black children to have difficulty speaking English, since they are more likely to speak another language at home.⁴³ Thirty-one percent of Hispanic children had difficulty speaking English in 1995, while 74 percent of Hispanic children spoke another language at home. Likewise, 14 percent of children of "other" races (including Asians) had difficulty speaking English, while 46 percent of these children spoke another language at home. In contrast, one percent of both black and white children spoke English with difficulty, with only 3 and 4 percent of them, respectively, speaking another language at home.

For additional detail, see Table ED1.

⁴²Parents were asked if their children spoke a language other than English at home and how well they could speak English. Categories used for reporting were "Very well", "Well", "Not well", and "Not at all". All those who were reported to speak less than "Very well" were considered to have difficulty speaking English.

⁴³For this indicator, estimates for whites and blacks exclude Hispanics of those races.

Figure ED2 Percentage of 3-to -5-year-olds who were read to every day by mother's education, 1996



Estimates are based on 3- to 5-year-olds who have yet to enter kindergarten.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Education Survey, related Table ED2, this publication.

FAMILY READING TO YOUNG CHILDREN

Research indicates that reading to young children promotes language acquisition and is related to literacy development, and, later on, to achievement in reading comprehension and overall success in school.⁴⁴

The percentage of young children who are read to daily by a family member is one indicator of the extent to which young children are prepared for school.

- In 1996, 57 percent of children ages 3 to 5⁴⁵ were read to by a family member every day in the last week, up slightly from 53 percent in 1993.
- As a mother's education increases, so does the likelihood that her child is read to every day. In 1996, more than three-quarters (77 percent) of children whose mothers were college graduates were read to every day. In comparison, 62 percent of children whose mothers had some college experience, 49 percent whose mothers had completed high school but had no education beyond that, and 37 percent whose mothers had not completed high school were read to every day.
- White children are more likely to be read to every day than either black or Hispanic children.⁴⁶ Sixty-four (64) percent of white children, 44 percent of black children, and 39 percent of Hispanic children were read to every day in 1996.
- Children in families with incomes below the poverty line are less likely to be read to every day than are children in families with incomes above the poverty line. Less than half (46 percent) of children in poverty were read to every day in 1996, compared to 61 percent of children above the poverty line.
- Children living with two parents are more likely to be read to every day than are children who live with one or no parent. Sixty-one (61) percent of children in two-parent households were read to every day in 1996, compared to 46 percent of children living with one or no parent.

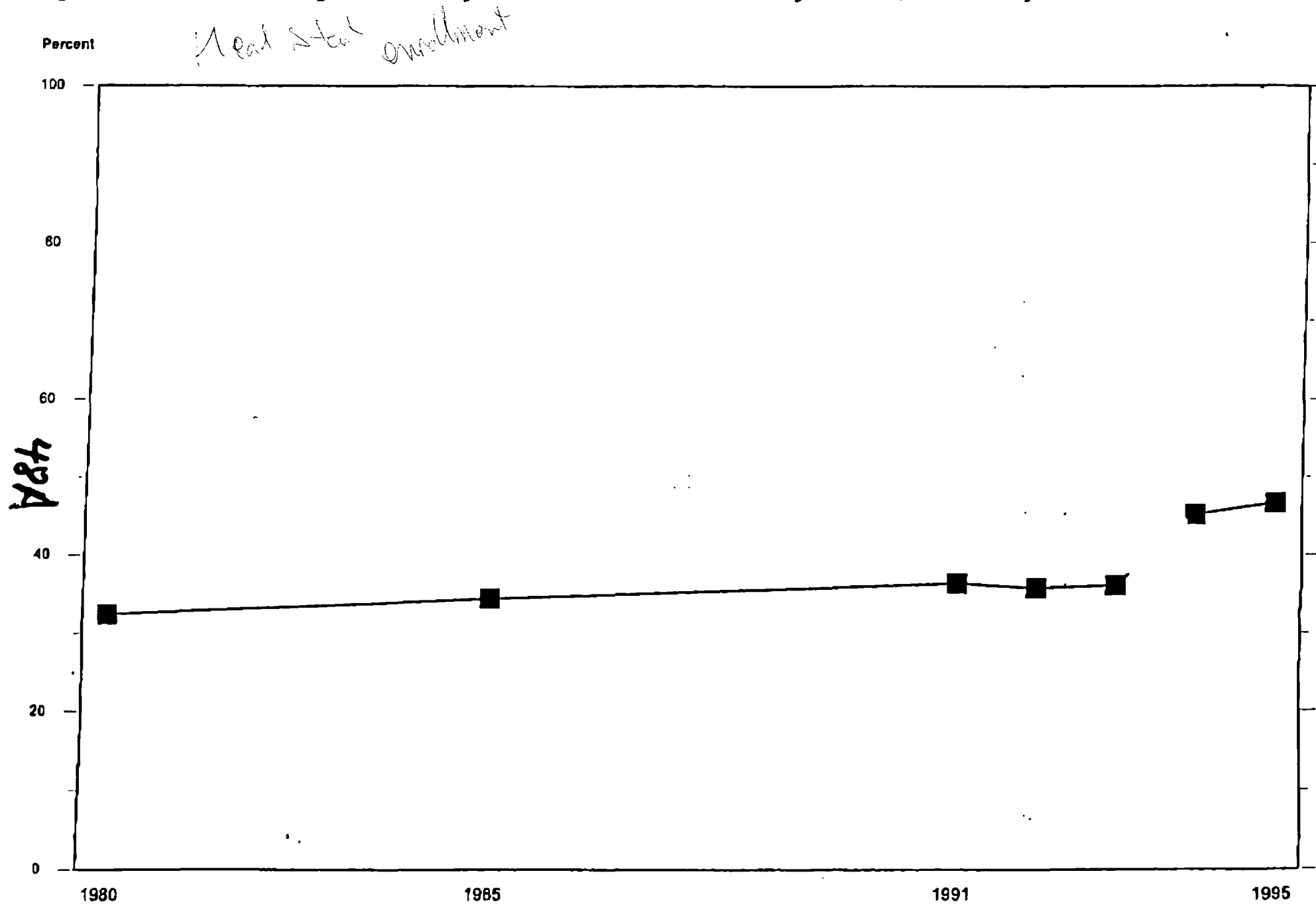
For additional detail, see Table ED2.

⁴⁴Wells, C.G. 1985. "Preschool literacy-related activities and success in school." In D. Olson, N. Torrance, & A. Hildyard (Eds.), *Literacy, Language, and Learning: The Nature and Consequences of Literacy*, (pp. 229-255). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

⁴⁵The data refer to children who are not yet in kindergarten. Throughout this discussion, "children" refers to 3- to 5-year-olds.

⁴⁶For this indicator, estimates for whites and blacks exclude Hispanics of those races.

Figure ED3.A Percentage of 3- to 4-year-olds enrolled in nursery school, selected years 1980-95

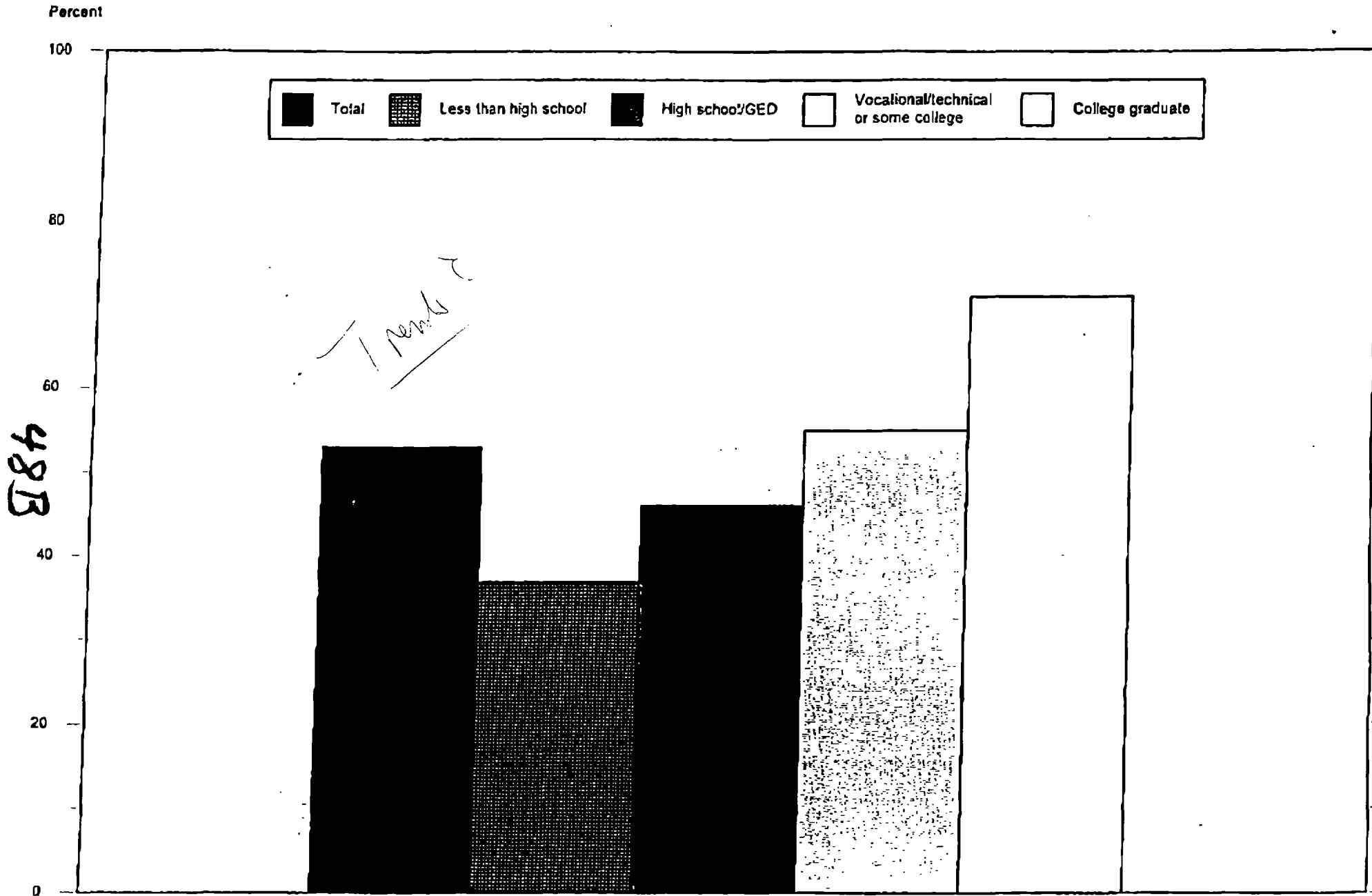


Note: Data for 1994 and 1995 may not be compatible with earlier years due to changes in survey procedures.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, October Current Population Surveys.

See related Table ED3.A, this publication.

Figure ED3.B Percentage of 3- to 4-year-olds yet to enter kindergarten who were enrolled in center-based ear childhood programs by mother's education level, 1996



Note: Estimates are based on children who have yet to enter kindergarten.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Education Survey, 1996.
See related Table ED3.B, this publication.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Research suggests that participation in an early childhood program helps prepare all children for success in kindergarten and subsequent grades. It may particularly help prepare children from low-income families for elementary school.⁴⁷ Like family reading, participation in an early childhood program is a measure of young children's preparation for school.

- In 1993, 36 percent of 3- to 4-year-olds yet to enter kindergarten attended nursery school, a substantial increase from the 15 percent who attended nursery school in 1970.
- When a broader group of early childhood programs are considered, more than half (53 percent) of 3- to 4-year-olds yet to enter kindergarten attended one of several kinds of center-based early childhood programs in 1996. These programs include nursery schools, preschool programs, Head Start programs, day care centers, and prekindergarten programs.
- Children with more highly-educated mothers are more likely to attend a center-based program than others. Seventy-one (71) percent of children whose mothers had completed college attended such a program in 1996, compared to 37 percent whose mothers had less than a high school education.
- Children living in poverty are less likely to attend a center-based program than children whose families have higher incomes. In 1996, 58 percent of children ages 3 to 4 whose families had incomes above the poverty line were enrolled in a center-based program, compared to 41 percent of children whose families had incomes at or below the poverty line.
- Black children are somewhat more likely than white children and much more likely than Hispanic children to attend a center-based program. In 1996, 63 percent of black children ages 3 to 4 attended a center-based program, compared to 54 percent of white children and 37 percent of Hispanic children.⁴⁸

For additional detail, see Tables ED3.A and ED3.B.

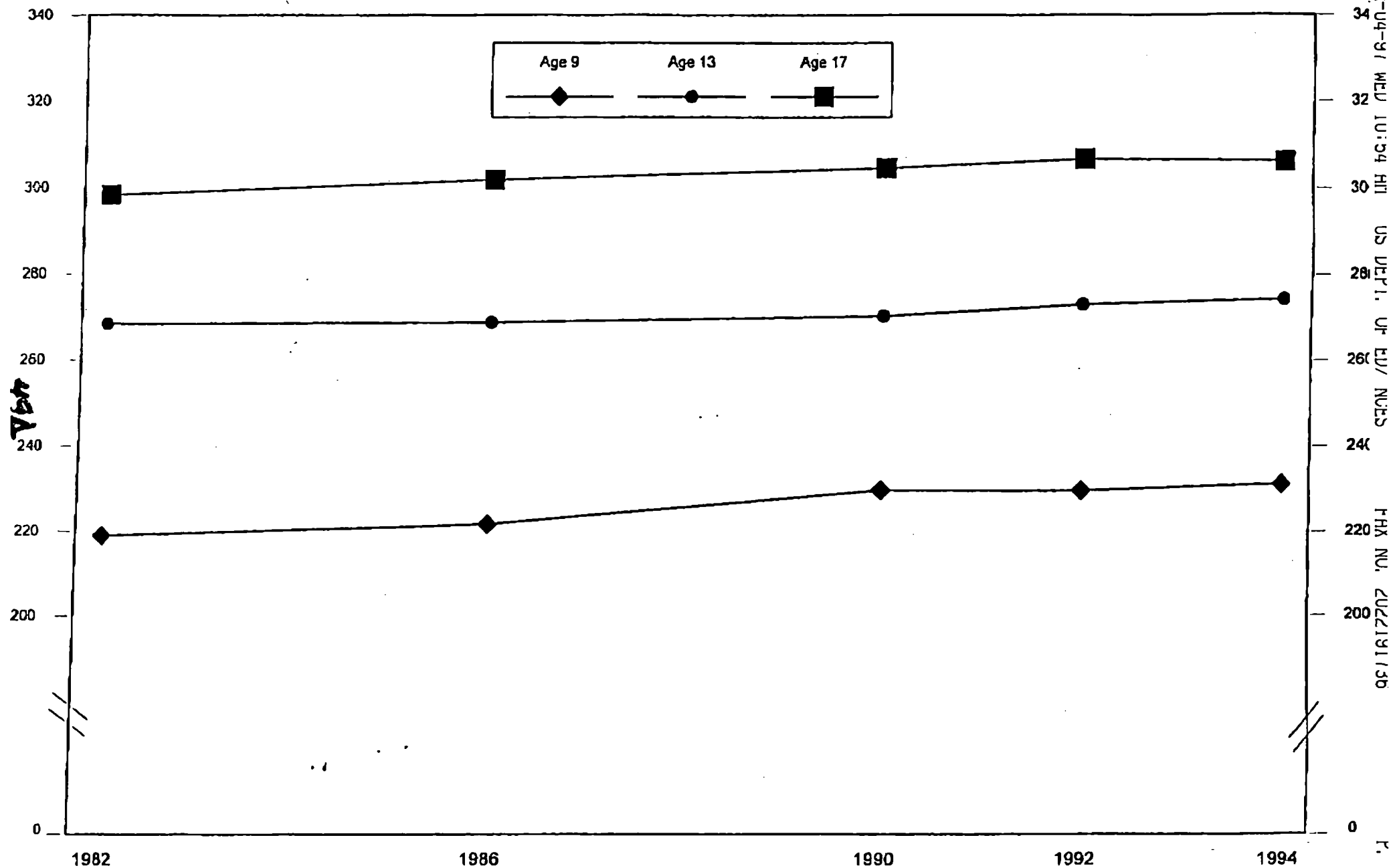
⁴⁷Barnett, S.W. 1992. "Benefits of Compensatory Preschool Education." *Journal of Human Resources* 27:279-312.

⁴⁸ For this indicator, estimates for whites and blacks exclude Hispanics of those races.

Figure ED4.A Math proficiency scores for 9-, 13-, and 17-year-olds, selected years 1982-94

Average score
(on a scale from 0-500)

proficiency level
Time

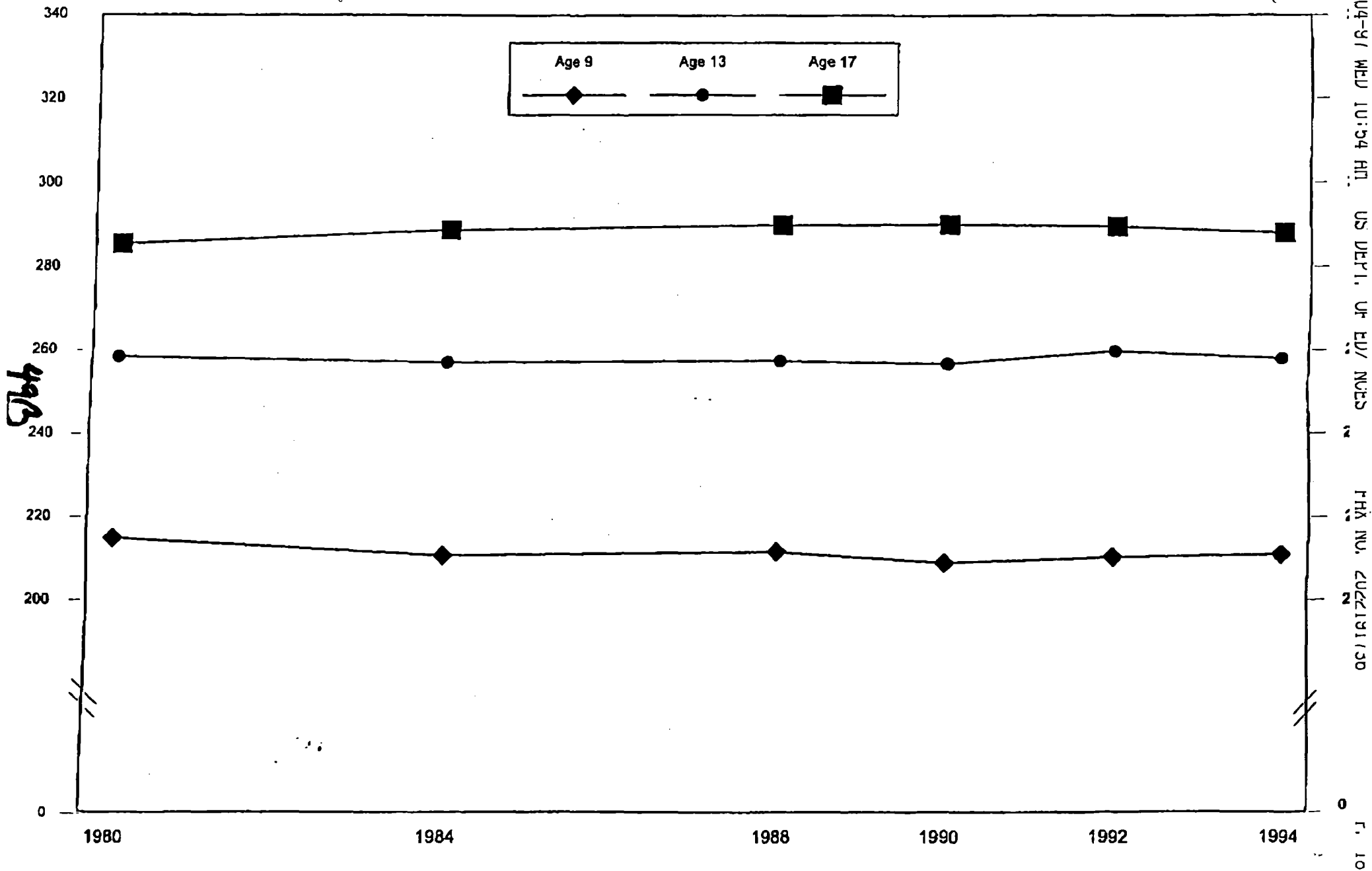


Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress.
See related Table ED4.A, this publication.

Figure ED4.B Reading proficiency scores for 9-, 13-, and 17-year-olds, selected years 1980-94

Average score
(on a scale from 0-500)

Proficiency level



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress.
See related Table ED4.B, this publication.

MATH AND READING PROFICIENCY

The extent and content of students' knowledge and their ability to think, learn, and communicate affect their ability to succeed in the labor market, above and beyond the attainment of a degree or the number of years they have attended school. On average, students with higher test scores will earn more and will be unemployed less than students with lower test scores.⁴⁹ Math and reading achievement test scores are important measures of students' skills in these subject areas, as well as good indicators of achievement overall in school. To measure progress in math and reading, the National Assessment of Educational Progress conducts national assessments of 9-, 13-, and 17-year-olds.

- U.S. students have made modest improvements in math proficiency scores in the last decade or so. Math scores increased somewhat for 9-year-olds between 1982 and 1994, and increased slightly for 13- and 17-year-olds during that time period.
- There has been little or no progress in reading proficiency since 1980. Reading proficiency scores for 9-year-olds have been stable from 1984 to 1994, following a slight decline between 1980 and 1984. Reading scores for 13-year-olds have been stable from 1980 to 1994. Reading scores for 17-year-olds increased slightly between 1980 and 1990, and have not changed significantly since then.
- Whites have consistently had higher reading and math scores than either blacks or Hispanics at ages 9, 13, and 17.⁵⁰
- On average, 13- and 17-year-olds whose parents have completed more years of school score higher on reading and math assessments than do their peers whose parents have fewer years of education.⁵¹
- Girls have consistently higher reading scores than boys at all ages. In math, 9-year-old boys and girls had similar proficiency scores in 1994. Among 13- and 17-year-olds, however, boys scored slightly higher than girls in math in 1994.

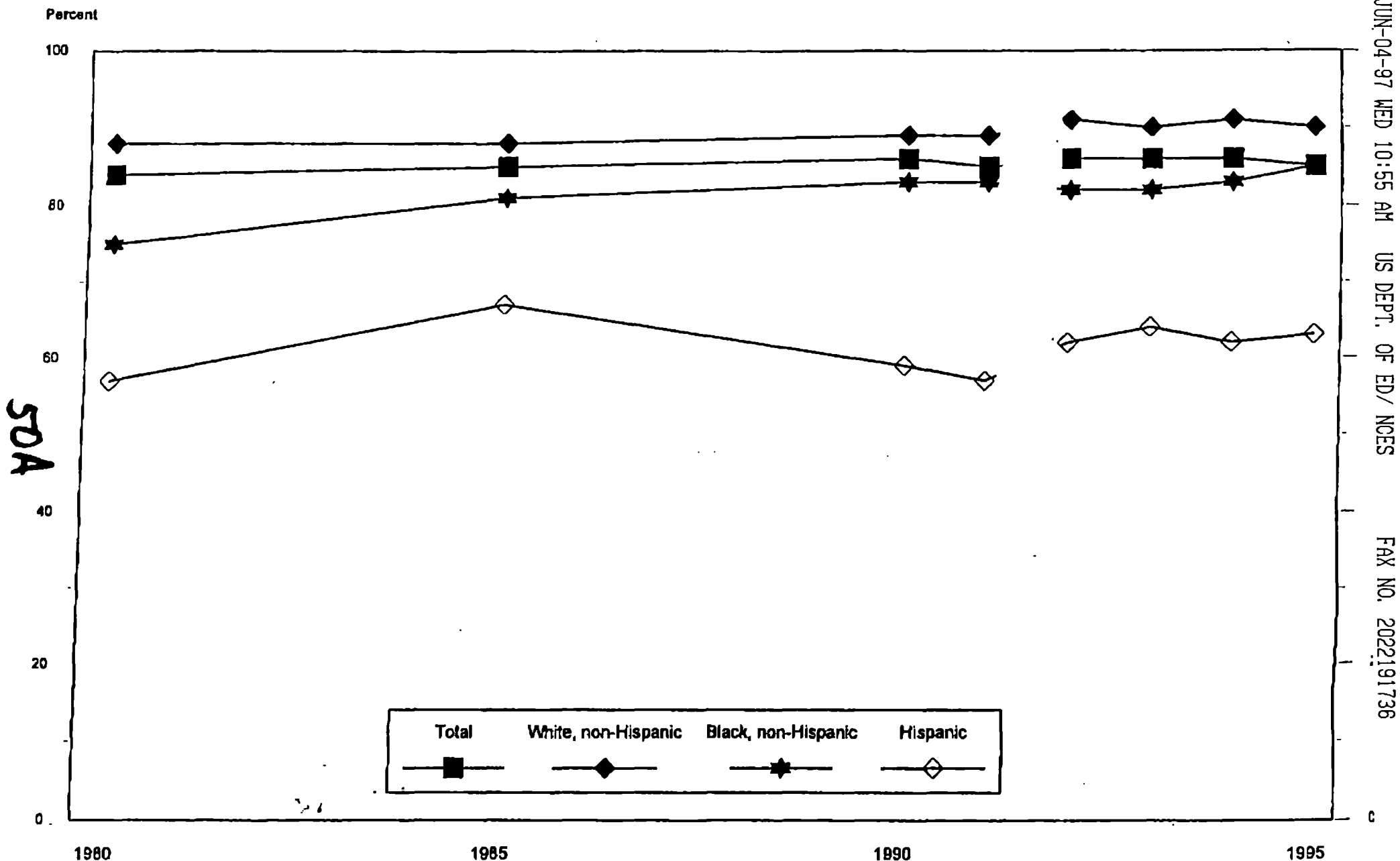
For additional detail, see Tables ED4.A and ED4.B.

⁴⁹U.S. Department of Education. National Center for Education Statistics. *Education and the Economy: An Indicators Report*, by Paul T. Decker, Jennifer King Rice, Mary T. Moore, and Mary Rollefson, Washington, DC: 1997.

⁵⁰For this indicator, estimates for whites and blacks exclude Hispanics of those races.

⁵¹Data on parent's level of education are not reliable for 9-year-olds.

Figure ED5 Percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds who have completed high school by race and Hispanic origin, selected years 1980-95



Note: Data after 1991 may not be strictly comparable to earlier estimates due to changes in survey question wording. Estimates refer only to those who are not currently enrolled in high school or below.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, October Current Population Survey. Tabulated by U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. See related Table ED5, this publication.

HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION

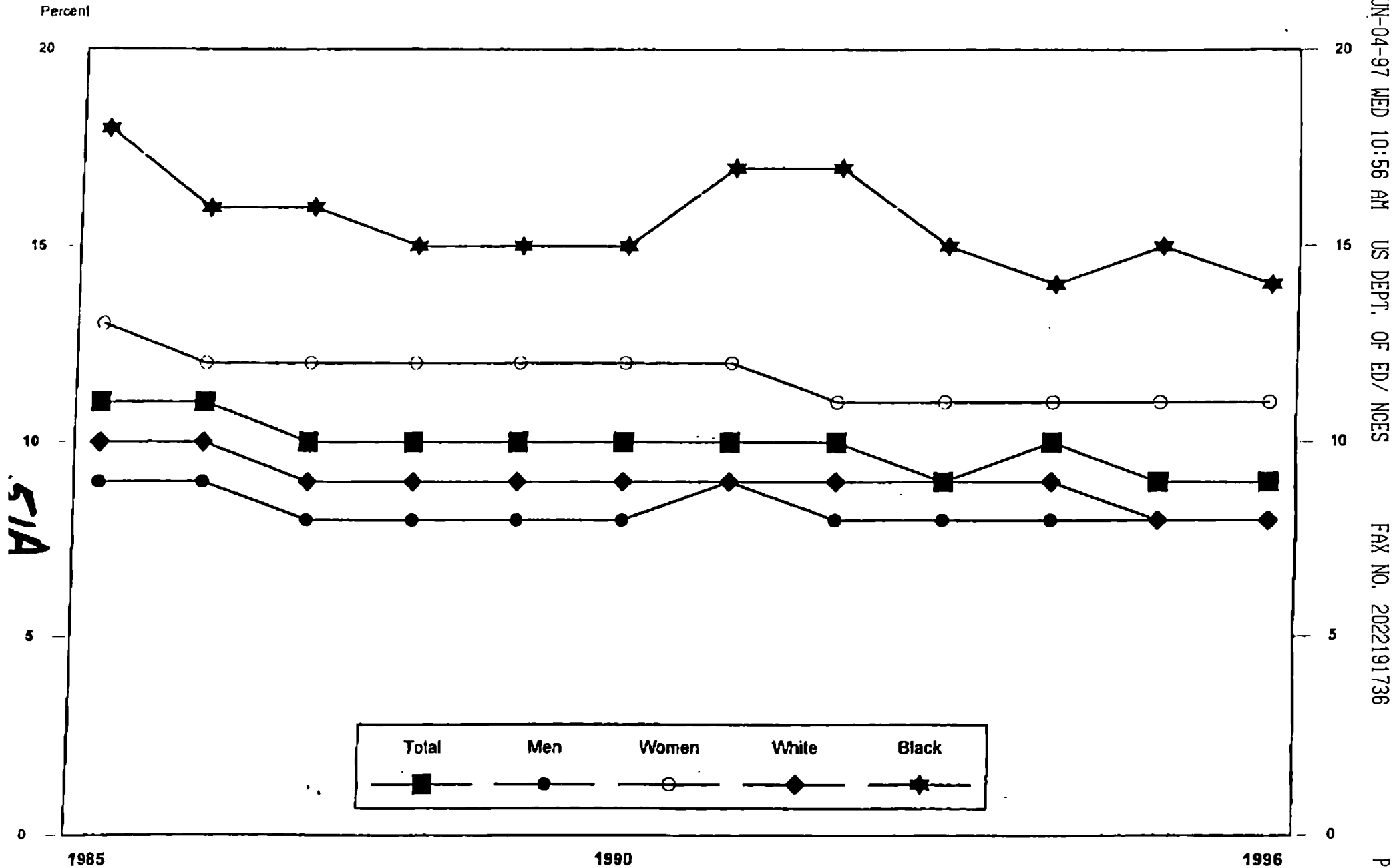
A high school diploma or its equivalent represents mastery of the basic reading, writing, and math skills necessary to function in modern society. The percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds with a high school diploma or an equivalent credential is a measure of the extent to which young adults have completed a basic prerequisite for higher education and many entry-level jobs.

- In 1995, 85 percent of Americans ages 18 to 24 who were not currently enrolled in high school had completed high school, either with a diploma or an alternative credential such as a GED. The high school completion rate has varied little since 1980, when it was 84 percent.
- For blacks, high school completion rates have increased substantially, from 75 percent in 1980 to 85 percent in 1995.⁵² They have increased less dramatically for whites, from 88 percent in 1980 to 90 percent in 1995.
- Hispanics have consistently had lower high school completion rates than either blacks or whites. The Hispanic high school completion rate of 63 percent in 1995 appears to have increased slightly since 1980, but these changes are not statistically significant.
- Most young people (78 percent in 1995) complete high school by earning a regular high school diploma. Others complete high school by passing an exam, such as the GED. In 1995, 7 percent of all 18- to 24-year-olds who were not enrolled in high school had earned a GED or alternative credential.

For additional detail, see Table ED5.

⁵²For this indicator, estimates for whites and blacks exclude Hispanics of those races.

Figure ED6 Percentage of youth ages 16-19 who are neither in school nor working by sex and race, selected years 1985-96



Note: Data for 1994 and subsequent years are not strictly comparable with data for prior years due to changes in questionnaire design and methodology.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey. Tabulated by U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.
See related Table ED6, this publication.

DETACHED YOUTH

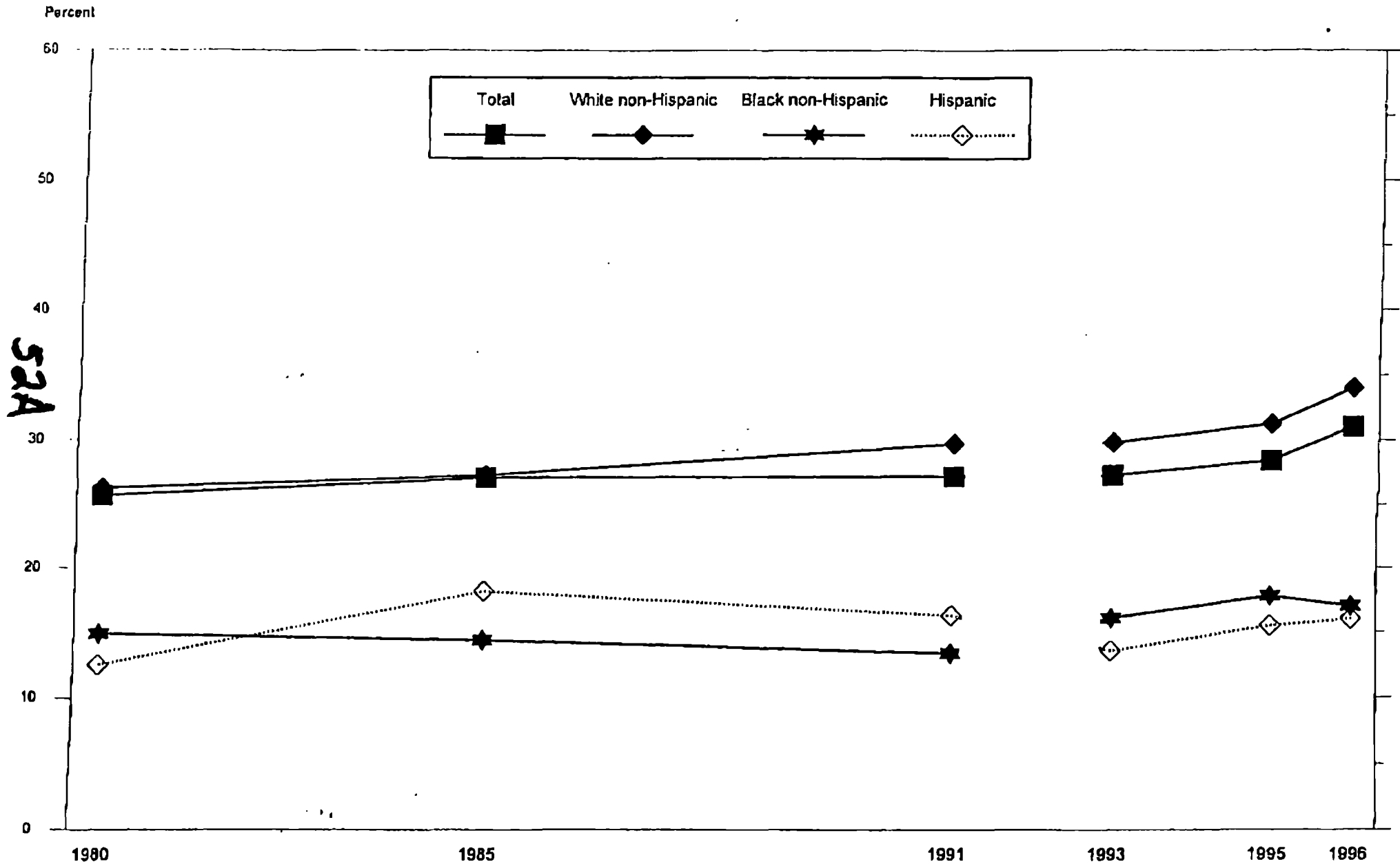
"Detached youth" refers to young people ages 16-19 who are neither in school nor working. Research suggests that this detachment, particularly if it lasts for several years, increases the risk that a young person, over time, will have lower earnings and a less stable employment history than his or her peers who stayed in school and/or secured jobs.⁵³ The percentages of youth who are detached measures the proportion of young people who, at a particular point in time, are in circumstances that may seriously limit their future prospects.

- During the 1990s, there has been little change overall in the proportion of detached youth. In 1996, about 9 percent of the nation's 16- to 19-year olds were neither enrolled in school nor working, slightly lower than the rate of 11 percent in 1985.
- Almost all of the decline in the proportion of detached youth occurred among young women. In 1985, 13 percent of young women were neither in school nor working. By 1996, this proportion had decreased to 11 percent. Nevertheless, young women continue to be more likely to be detached than young men.
- Black and Hispanic youth are considerably more likely to be detached than white youth. In 1996, 14 percent of black youth and 16 percent of Hispanic youth were neither in school nor working, compared to 8 percent of white youth.
- The proportion of black youth who are detached has decreased from 18 percent in 1985 to 14 percent in 1996. Among Hispanic youth, the percentage who are detached has changed little, fluctuating between 16 and 18 percent during the 1985-1996 period.

For additional detail, see Table ED6.

⁵³Brown, B. "Who Are America's Disconnected Youth?" Report prepared for the American Enterprise Institute, March 23, 1996.

Figure ED7 Percentage of high school graduates ages 25-29 who have completed a bachelor's degree or high by race and Hispanic origin, selected years 1980-96



Note: Prior to 1992, this indicator was measured as having "4 or more years of college" rather than the actual attainment of a bachelor's degree.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, March Current Population Survey. Tabulated by U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. See related Table ED7, this publication.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education, especially completion of a bachelor's degree or higher, generally enhances a person's employment prospects and increases his or her earnings potential.⁵⁴ The percentage of high school graduates who have completed a degree is one measure of the percentage of young people who have successfully applied for, financed, and persisted through a program of higher education.

- In 1996, 31 percent of high school graduates ages 25 to 29 had completed college and earned a bachelor's degree or higher.
- This percentage has increased in recent decades from 22 percent in 1971 to 31 percent in 1996.
- White high school graduates ages 25 to 29 are more likely than either black or Hispanic high school graduates in the same age group to have earned a bachelor's degree.⁵⁵ In 1996, 34 percent of white, 17 percent of black, and 16 percent of Hispanic high school graduates in this age group had a bachelor's degree or higher.
- In 1996, an additional 10 percent of high school graduates ages 25 to 29 had earned an associate degree, but not a bachelor's degree.
- In 1996, 10 percent of white high school graduates ages 25 to 29 had associate degrees as their highest degree, as did about 8 percent of black and Hispanic high school graduates in this age group.

For additional detail, see Table ED7.

⁵⁴Higher Education Today: Facts in Brief. May 1994. Washington, DC: American Council on Education: Division of Policy Analysis and Research, p. 5.

⁵⁵For this indicator, estimates for whites and blacks exclude Hispanics of those races.

INDICATORS NEEDED**Education**

- **Early childhood development.** Though two indicators are presented on young children's exposure to reading and early childhood education, there is no regular source of information that can be used to monitor specific social, intellectual, and emotional skills of preschoolers over time.
- **Course-taking.** Several different indicators of course-taking are possible with current data sources, yet there is a lack of consensus about the most important courses to monitor over time that are predictive of better life chances in the future.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND IMPROVEMENT

NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND IMPROVEMENT

NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS

June 6, 1997

MEMORANDUM TO MIKE SMITH

FROM : Pat Forgiione *Pat Forgiione*

SUBJECT : Briefing on the Child-Well Being Report

On Wednesday, July 2 (from 9-11 a.m.) at the National Press Club, **America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being**, will be released by the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, with NCES taking the lead. The Forum which has existed for about two years was formally established in April 1997 by a Presidential Executive Order which directed it to produce an annual report in cooperation with OMB. Together, the agencies comprising the Forum have developed a set of indicators (some 31 in number) that will be used to monitor child well-being annually by the federal government (see attached list of indicators and agencies).

We have scheduled an initial meeting with you and key staff for Wednesday, June 11 at 2:00-2:30 p.m., in your office. We will set up a more in-depth meeting for June 23-25. Be advised that selected members of the media will be given embargoed copies of the report on June 23 in order to prepare in-depth stories. Therefore, there is the possibility that reporters may be calling the Department about the report between June 25 and July 2; Secretary Riley is out of the country during this time period (June 26 through July 6). We can set up a special briefing for the Secretary upon his return, if such is desirable.

Carol Rascoe was involved in this effort while she was the Domestic Policy Advisor. We might wish to invite her to the June 11 briefing.

Please advise me on how you wish us to proceed in this matter.

Attachment

cc: Judy Winston
Terry Peterson
Mike Cohen
Bill Kincaid
Kevin Sullivan
Judy Wurtzel
David Frank
Marty Orland
Mary Frase
Laura Lippman

Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics

The Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics was founded in 1994 to foster the coordination and collaboration of the collection and reporting of federal data on children and families. Members of the Forum as of Spring 1997 are listed below.

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Ann Rosewater, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Services Policy

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