



indicators

The official newsletter of the International Society for Child Indicators



September 2009

ISCI News

Look for
conference and
pre-conference
programs soon at

JOIN US FOR ISCI'S 2009 CONFERENCE

'Counting Children In! Child Indicators: Research, Theory, Policy and Practice'

<http://www.isci09.com/>

November 4–5, 2009

Pre-Conference Symposium » November 3

ISCI's second conference, to be hosted by the Social Justice and Social Change Research Centre (SJSC), University of Western Sydney, is shaping up to be an exciting event. Make your plans now to attend!

The November 4–5 conference—in conjunction with the SJSC Symposium "Children as Experts in Their Own Lives: Child Inclusive Research" on November 3—promises to be truly global. The two forums have attracted abstract submissions from countries around the world, including



Australia, Canada, the Czech Republic, Cuba, India, Korea, Thailand, the United Kingdom, the U.S., Norway, and Uganda.

The ISCI Conference will feature a number of short keynote presentations on children rights and child indicators, as well as on issues of theory, measurement and diversity relevant to developing and applying indicators. Keynote speakers are from Australia, France, South Africa, the United Kingdom, Taiwan, and the U.S.

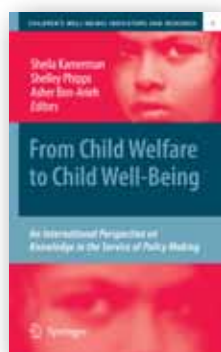
The SJSC Symposium program will focus on research by children and researching with children. It will include a presentation from a class of children at a Sydney primary school, a keynote presentation from Professor Mary Kellett of the UK, on children as researchers, and a panel of respondents to the keynote paper. Concurrent paper sessions, workshops, and panels from researchers, policymakers, and practitioners coming from diverse perspectives and countries ensure that the conference and symposium will be both informative and dynamic.

Social events include a welcome reception and a conference dinner. At the dinner, to be held in a historical building at Parramatta, a new interactive online source for child well-being research and data, Wikichild, will be launched. These events provide additional opportunities for conference registrants to network and exchange ideas with others who share similar goals and interests around the well-being of children.

NEW Book Series from ISCI >>

ISCI is launching a new book series published by Springer. Look for the first book, to be released in conjunction with the 2009 ISCI Conference in Western Sydney.

This unique and impressive collection is an outstanding tribute to Alfred J. Kahn, one of the most influential researchers on child welfare in the 20th century. The book provides an exceptional opportunity to "experience" the history of the past 50 years of child welfare as well as its current status and future. It takes the readers through the movement, from a deficit-oriented policy to a developmental model, from a targeted and selective strategy to a universal approach, and from child welfare to child well-being. Written by renowned experts, the chapters are organized into five clusters. The first one includes Al Kahn's last written contribution to the field and looks at how children and families have changed over time as has the research on their well-being. The next two clusters focus on the traditional child welfare system and on different theoretical perspectives. The fourth and fifth clusters focus on economic support for child and family well-being and a discussion of current child well-being issues.



Indicators, the newsletter of ISCI, provides information on child indicators with an international audience of researchers, advocates, policymakers, and the media. To submit material, please see contact information on page 7.

Conferences

UPCOMING CONFERENCES

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Conference

October 27–30, 2009 • Busan, South Korea

The 3rd OECD World Forum on Statistics, Knowledge and Policy is expected to draw more than 1,000 participants from more than 100 countries. Entitled “Charting Progress, Building Visions, Improving Life,” the forum will address these key topics: 1) what to measure, 2) how to measure progress, and 3) ensuring that those measures are used.



This is an invitation-only conference but several ISCI representatives will be there, including Asher Ben-Arieh and Bill O'Hare.

For more information, go to <http://dd4d.net/Downloads/Busan-World-Forum.pdf>.

XVII World Congress of Sociology

July 2010 • Gothenburg, Sweden

The World Congress of Sociology and the International Sociological Association will hold a conference next July which will feature a session on childhood indicators. It will be a joint session between Social Indicators and Sociology of Childhood. The co-organizers of the session are Heinz-Herbert Noll (Heinz-herbert.noll@gesis.org) and Doris Buhler-Neiderberger (bueheler@uniwuppertal.de).

A detailed call for papers and more information about the conference can be found at <http://www.isa-Sociology.org/congress2010/rc/rd55.htm>.

RECENT CONFERENCES

Child Well-Being Expert Consultation

Co-organized by UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, OECD, and the European Commission

For three days in May, 72 experts from 22 countries and international organizations met in Paris to discuss indicators to assess child well-being from an international perspective. Attendees included 17 OECD experts, four from UNICEF, two from the European Commission, nine from universities around the world, 23 from ministries or national statistics institutions, and 17 from international NGOs and other organizations.



The May 25–27 agenda, which featured nine presentation sessions, a group discussion, and a summary session, is available at http://www.oecd.org/document/22/0,3343,en_2649_34819_42534358_1_1_1_1,00.html.

The expert presentations were extremely interesting, and debates at the end of each session were enriching—though differences of opinion were clear.

According to OECD experts, governments are investing huge amounts of money into their children and yet there are few indicators systems appropriate for evaluating the outcomes of such large investments.

Some presenters emphasized the need for helping governments identify and organize data collections that are useful for policymaking. For one Swedish expert, Prof. Janne Jonson, “satisfaction” measures, though evaluative, are not “reasonable political goals,” and “aspiration levels should not interfere in the measure of children’s lives.” He criticized

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the concept of “well-being” and proposed to use “level of living,” defined as the individual command over resources... through which she can control and consciously direct her living conditions, which “naturally” includes positive indicators.

One OECD expert said many UNICEF indicators are advocacy relevant but “less policy relevant.” This expert also stated that little is known about child determinants of subjective indicators and therefore these indicators are not included in OECD publications. In fact, in a forthcoming OECD publication, *Enhancing Child Well-Being*, a chapter devoted to a new system of indicators of children’s well-being has been included. The system focuses on both present and future outcomes for children.

Some participants pointed out that evaluation of child well-being should be not only relevant for policymaking, but also for children. Many stressed the need for more information about children’s lives from an international perspective in a systematic and continued way “beyond survival.”

The concept of “subjective well-being” of children was probably the most debated and controversial. Some participants were not happy using subjective indicators. But what subjectivity of data means for different participants remained rather unclear.

Many participants agreed to collect data from children and to consider children as the unit of observation. However, how to collect that data was controversial, and some stressed the difficulty in obtaining quality data from younger children. Any data provided by children is subjective? Subjective child indicators refer to subjective feelings of children? The difference between subjective instruments to collect data from children and subjectivity of a complex social reality was pointed out.

Children’s well-being indicators is a young field of research. And different meanings of well-being are included in it. Additionally, it was pointed out at the conference that the perspective of different social agents involved in child well-being should be taken into account and even included in the measurement, as components of a complex reality. It was recalled that Campbell, Converse and Rodgers (1976) defined as well-being including perceptions, evaluations and aspirations of people.

Examples showed that sometimes indicators of efficiency of the school system do not correlate with satisfaction of children with the school system.

A UNICEF representative stated that most exiting indicators do not capture emerging problems of children (e.g., children in institutions) and that we need child well-being data that allows for micro-analysis.

Another interesting debate was on the intergenerational transmission of disadvantage and of child well-being. Questions were raised about intergenerational transmission of income, wealth or school results. An OECD expert presented results showing that intergenerational “mobility” may be very different when analyzing income: In some countries parents’ income are extremely related to children’s (France, the U.S., the United Kingdom, Italy), but in others are not (Norway, Australia).

The Irish project “Giving Children a Voice” presented an innovative research method to capture the meaning of well-being among children.

Many innovative ideas and experiences were presented about measuring child well-being using positive indicators. One expert stated that perhaps the best predictor of children well-becoming is children’s well-being.

Children’s Wellbeing Discussed at ISQOLS Conference

The International Society for Quality of Life Studies held its IX conference at the historical Innocenti Research Centre in Florence, Italy, July 19–23. In addition to a plenary session on measuring and monitoring the well-being of children, several breakout sessions were held. Conference participants seemed to welcome this increased focus on child indicators. Given the overlap of interest in measuring the quality of life of children, leaders of ISQOLS and ISCI are exploring the possibility of holding joint meeting in the future.

For more information, go to <http://www.isqols.org/>.

Save the Date

Clemson University’s Institute on Family and Neighborhood Life Symposium
 ‘A Place for Us’: Toward Inclusive Communities for Children and Families
 April 11–14, 2010 • Greenville, SC



Data Sources

MEASURE DHS Provides National Data on Children's Health

MEASURE DHS (Demographic and Health Surveys) offers a number of valuable resources for researchers and others in the child indicators field. Following is an overview of the organization and its services.



Since 1984, MEASURE DHS has provided technical assistance to more than 240 surveys in over 85 countries, advancing global understanding of health and population trends in developing countries. Funded by the United

States Agency for International Development (USAID) and multiple other donors, the MEASURE DHS project has earned a worldwide reputation for collecting and disseminating accurate, nationally representative data on fertility, maternal and child health, malaria, HIV, and nutrition. (MEASURE stands for Monitoring and Evaluation to Assess and Use Results.)

Most DHS surveys collect information from 6,500 to 10,000 households including detailed data on children under age five. The DHS provides information on infant and child mortality, children's nutritional status, duration and frequency of breastfeeding, micronutrient intake, vaccination, prevalence and treatment of diarrhea, acute respiratory infection and fever, use of mosquito nets, school attendance, and orphanhood, and related topics, such as parental education and employment, that affect child health. Consistent sampling methods and standard questionnaires ensure that surveys are comparable across countries and over time within one country.

More recently, Service Provision Assessment (SPA) surveys have been carried out in eight countries. The SPA evaluates a nationally representative sample of health care facilities regarding the availability of medicines, equipment and supplies, water, electricity, and infection control, in-service training, and direct observation of provider-client interactions in child health and other services.

The MEASURE DHS Project works hard to make this valuable information widely available. Country reports, user-friendly key findings reports, and analytical studies are available at no charge on the project website (www.measuredhs.com). Website tool such as the

STATcompiler (www.statcompiler.com) and STATmapper (www.statmapper.com) allow users to compare child health indicators in many countries and download customized maps and tables for reports and presentations. Researchers are invited to download survey data sets to carry out their own analyses.

Worldwide, policymakers, program managers, and international health agencies rely on DHS data to guide public health programs. In India, for example, Prime Minister Singh was so alarmed at the 2005–06 survey results on child anemia and stunting that he sent letters to the chief ministers in each of India's 29 states requiring them to take immediate measures to improve child nutrition. In Nigeria, projects funded by the British Department of International Development refocused their activities in response to DHS findings showing limited use of mosquito nets.

For more information on MEASURE DHS, go to www.measuredhs.com.

Multi-Country IPUMS Data Available from Minnesota Center

The Minnesota Population Center (MPC) offers several free data resources that are useful for studying children's well-being. Because all MPC datasets contain data on individuals and their households, they are ideal for multivariate analysis and creating custom tabulations.



The **Integrated Health Interview Series (IHIS)** includes National Health Interview Survey data from 1969 to 2006. The IHIS includes basic household demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, as well as detailed information on health conditions (such as asthma and birth weight), health care access and insurance coverage, and parents' opinions of a child's social and emotional strengths and difficulties.



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The Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) comprises three distinct projects:

- » **IPUMS-International** is the world's largest collection of publicly available census data and includes samples taken around the world since 1960.
- » **IPUMS-USA** contains American census data from 1850 to the present.
- » **IPUMS-CPS** contains Current Population Survey data from 1962 to the present.



All IPUMS datasets include information on family interrelationships, so parents' characteristics can be easily linked to their children. They also contain information (of varying detail) on fertility, health and disabilities, receipt of public assistance, and housing quality. IPUMS-CPS also has considerable detail on health insurance coverage.

Finally, the American Time Use Survey extract system (ATUS-X) allows users make customized datasets from the ATUS, which contains detailed information on the time parents spend on child-related activities.

MPC datasets are especially well-suited for studying temporal change in children's well-being. In each dataset, all variables have similar coding schemes for each year of data, minimizing the challenges presented by major survey redesigns. Additionally, detailed documentation for each variable calls attention to relevant changes in the original survey questionnaires.

Users may view documentation and download data free of charge at <http://www.ipums.org>.

World Data Sheet Shows Youth Concentrated in Africa, Asia

The Washington, DC-based Population Reference Bureau released its **2009 World Population Data Sheet** on August 12, with a special focus on the world's youth. Global population numbers are on track to reach 7 billion in 2011, just 12 years after reaching 6 billion (in 1999). Virtually all of the growth is in developing countries. And the growth of the world's youth population (ages 15 to 24) is shifting into the poorest of those countries.

The Data Sheet and its summary report provide up-to-date demographic, health, and environment data for all countries and major world regions. New on the Data Sheet this year are data on carbon dioxide emissions per capita; estimates of the percent of population living on less than US\$2 a day; and HIV/AIDS prevalence rates among young men and women ages 15 to 24.

For more information, contact Ellen Carnevale at 202.939.5407 or ecarnevale@prb.org.

Publications and Online Resources

Chapin Hall Report Examines U.S. Statistical System

Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago has published a report on **"Improving Indicators of Child Well-Being."** The report makes a number of recommendations on new directions for child well-being indicators, including the areas of early childhood and young adult transitions. It also argues for additional indicators on childcare, poverty, and immigration. The report follows a symposium on child well-being indicators held in December 2008, attended by leading experts from universities, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations. It is available on the Chapin Hall website at <http://www.chapinhall.org/research/report/improving-indicators-child-well-being>.

2009 Kids Count Report

The 20th annual KIDS COUNT report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation was released on July 28, 2009. This data book provides measures of child well-being for the nation as a whole and for each of the 50 states. Measures are put into an overall index and states are ranked on overall child well-being as well as each of ten key measures. The essay in this year's report focuses on data on children available from the U.S. Federal statistical system. The report is available online at www.kidscount.org.

Key Websites for Information on Children

Following are some key websites that offer indicators information on children, including governmental and nongovernmental sources. We hope this will be the beginning of an ever-expanding list that we maintain on the ISCI website. Please feel free to send us information on additional sources.

» UNICEF – State of the World’s Children

(English and Spanish)

http://www.unicef.org/publications/index_42623.html

» United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

(Adopted in 1989)

<http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/k2crc.htm>

» UNICEF Monitoring Statistics

<http://www.unicef.org/statistics/index.html>

» UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre

<http://www.unicef-irc.org/>

» Innocenti Research Centre Database

<http://www.unicef-irc.org/databases/>

» Chapin Hall/University of Chicago Child Monitoring Project

<http://multinational-indicators.chapinhall.org/>

» Children of North America

<http://www.childreninnorthamerica.org/>

» International Society for Child Indicators (ISCI)

<http://www.childindicators.org/>

» International Data Base at U.S. Census Bureau

<http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/idb/>

Selected Country Reports

» Canadian Report

<http://www.ccsd.ca/pubs/2002/pcc02/index.htm>

» South African Child Gauge Report

www.ci.org.za/site/includes/content/general/gauge2007.html

» Kinderen in Tel Data Book (The Netherlands)

www.kinderenintel.nl

» Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Ireland)

www.omc.gov.ie

» Mexico KIDS COUNT Report

La Infancia Cuenta in Mexico

www.infanciacuenta.org

United States Reports

» The Annie E. Casey Foundation KIDS COUNT

www.kidscount.org

» Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics’ America’s Children

<http://childstats.gov>

» Foundation for Child Development’s Child Well-Being Index

<http://www.soc.duke.edu/~cwi/>

» Child Trends Data Bank

<http://www.childtrendsdatbank.org/>

» Children’s Defense Fund

http://www.childrensdefense.org/site/PageServer?pagename=policyareas_stateamericaschildren_2008

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Join the International Society for Child Indicators (ISCI)



The International Society for Child Indicators (ISCI) contributes to

improving the well-being of the world's children.

The ISCI seeks to build a network of individuals dedicated to improving measures and data resources, advancing data analysis, exploring theoretical issues, and publicizing and disseminating information on the status of children. ISCI is also working to enhance the capacity of the field, especially for countries in the initial stages of producing child well-being indicators. Finally, ISCI is identifying and developing ways to facilitate the dissemination and application of indicators in policy and practice.

For a full description and information on joining ISCI, please visit www.childindicators.org