

rate reached a record low. Average mathematics scores for 4th- and 8th-grade students increased, and the violent crime victimization rate among youth decreased. Although the number of children living in poverty decreased slightly in 2013, overall the rate remain high at 22 percent. The percentage of children with at least one parent employed full time year round slightly increased (see [Research Focus](#) box) ([Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2015](#)).

Research Focus

National Children's Study

The National Children's Study is the largest prospective, long-term study of children's health and development conducted in the United States. The study is designed to follow 100,000 children and their families from birth to 21 years old to understand the link between children's environments and their physical and emotional health and development ([Duncan, Kirkendall, and Citro, 2014](#)). Researchers hope that a study of this magnitude will provide information on innovative interventions for families, children, and health care providers to eradicate unhealthy diets, dental caries, and childhood obesity and to bring a significant reduction in violence, injury, substance abuse, and mental health disorders among the nation's children. This study supports the Healthy People 2020 primary goals to increase the quality and years of healthy life and eliminate health disparities related to race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status ([US Department of Health and Human Services, 2013a](#)).

Millions of children and their families have no health insurance, which results in a lack of access to care and health promotion services. In addition, disparities in pediatric health care are related to race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and geographic factors ([Flores and Lesley, 2014](#)). Patterns of child health are shaped by medical progress and societal trends. Urgent priorities for health and health care of children in the United States are the focus for action toward new policy priorities ([Box 1-1](#)).