

FORUM

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Debates about America's decline are overlooking most important indicator

Is the American Empire in decline? It is a topic of conversation from cocktail parties to think tanks. The most salient indicator is rarely discussed: how a nation cares for its children. • A nation that does not invest in the capabilities and health of rising generations cannot long endure as a great nation. We have reason to be deeply concerned about America's children and no time to lose.



Your Turn
Libby Marshall
Guest columnist

Risk for America's children begins before birth. In spite of progress against childhood diseases, infant deaths in the U.S. continue to rise from factors that are a direct result of lack of access to maternal health care and to poverty. Populations with the highest infant mortality, Black Americans and Native Americans, have double the infant mortality rate of White Americans. Kentucky is one of 14 states with the highest infant mortality rates.

Peer Western nations treat health care as a basic human right, but in the U.S., political battles over health care have raged for decades, especially since the passage of the Affordable Health Care Act (Obamacare) in 2010. The "One Big Beautiful Bill," passed by Congress in 2025, reduced federal subsidies for

the cost of health care coverage, eliminating health care for an estimated 10 million Americans.

Poverty, abuse and gun violence

Poverty is a risk to all children, not just to infants. The Kentucky Child Fatality and Near Fatality External Annual Report of 2025 found that parents facing economic hardship are nearly twice as likely to abuse their children as families without such hardship.

Child abuse data for Kentucky is particularly grim. Kentucky has been ranked No. 5 in overall child abuse and neglect in the U.S. by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

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