

**TRENDS AND INDICATORS ON CHILD AND FAMILY
WELL-BEING IN ARMENIA**

Country Paper

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**Background paper prepared for the Regional Monitoring
Report No. 8: *A Decade of Transition (2001)***

**The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the
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Collapse of the USSR and declaration of independence in Armenia resulted in decline of economy followed by breakdown of social structure and drastic drop of living standards of the population. Poverty became a wide-spread phenomenon in Armenia.

Number of actual population of the Republic of Armenia as of the beginning of 2000 was 3803.3 thousand people. In the period of independence, e.g. from 1991 to 1999 the number of population in the Republic increased by 228.9 thousand people. The average annual growth for that period was 0.7% (for comparison, the average annual growth in nine years preceding independence was 1.2 %).

Demographic indicators such as birth, death and migration rates distinctly demonstrate the ongoing, and even deepening social and economic crisis in Armenia.

The absolute number of live-birth in the period of independence (1991-1999) was reduced more than twice. The absolute number of registered death increased by 2,3%, and women death increased by 8,2%, while men death reduced by 1,8% that could be explained with high rates of labor migration among men. Based on results of different surveys and assessments of individual experts the number of non-registered migrants fluctuates from 620 thousand up to one million. According to the high rates of migration the actual population of the Republic currently is considerably less than the permanent.

1. Indicators for monitoring child and family well-being.

It's already several years that great number of social indicators are being monitored in the framework of the project MONEE. We tried to achieve a difficult objective – to identify the most important and typical social indicators for our country in seven social spheres.

1. Indicators in the field of demography and population health

The indicators of both children's and adults' health started to decline from the beginning of transition period. Reforms in the system of health care appeared to be ineffective, that can be explained by the budget limitations. Attendance of population to health institutions sharply decreased. The "poverty diseases" came forth again: the number of reported cases of tuberculosis started to steadily increase.

birth rate

share of pregnant with anemia,

maternity mortality rate,

children's mortality under 1 years,

causes of children's mortality under 1 years,

diseases of children, teenagers, and adults with

- infectious diseases,

- tuberculosis

- sexually transmitted diseases,

mortality of the entire population due to different reasons,

including:

mortality of teenagers from murders and suicides

2. Education.

Great losses are observed in the field of preschool education, the main causes of which are considered to be:

decline of women employment;
closure of many kindergartens;
increase of charges in kindergartens.

In the period of independence the absolute number of children attending kindergartens has been reduced to 2,7 times.

Problems are identified in the field of primary and secondary education, such as incomplete primary school enrollment, drop out and class repetition rates in the secondary school. But the most important factor is decay of the education value.

Enrollment in preschool education,
enrollment in primary education,
enrollment in unfinished secondary education,
enrollment in higher grades (9-10th),
indicators for drop out rates,
indicator for class repetition rates.

3. Juvenile crime

Transition period accompanied by breakdown of family and society structures, decline of value systems left the most negative impact on the juveniles (even more than on children), especially on drop out rates and number of those in conflict with law. Former student organizations were not replaced with new current youth centers.

Crimes, conducted by juveniles or with their participation
including

- murders

Number of convicted juveniles

-out of them men

-Number of arrested teenagers

Crimes against children and juveniles

Level of well-being

Concept of low life standards includes low income, low level of human development, inadequate food and malnutrition, as well as uncertainty and non-protection. Poverty is typical of extended families with children, unemployed, disabled and pensioners, dependants and refugees.

Share of families living below the poverty line,

- % poor,

- % very poor,

including:

- families with children at the age of 0-14,

Basic food usage,

Housing conditions,

including:

- housing conditions of the families having children at the age of 0-14

Access to the drinking water

including:

- access to the drinking water of those families having children at the age of 0-14 ,

Breadwinner/ dependents ratio.

5. Children and youth in the institutions

Deepening social and economic crisis in Armenia makes some parents rest the responsibility for the growth, development and protection of their children on the government.

Overall number of children involved in the state institutions,

including:

Number of children in orphanages (0-6 years old),

Number of children in the institutions for mentally and physically retarded

Number of children and juveniles in orphanages, boarding schools and other similar institutions.

6. State and social protection of low-income families

In the first stage of transition period textbooks were provided to the children by the government of the Republic to protect families with children from the negative impact of the crisis. However, budget constraints made the government reconsider its resolution. Besides children, different other categories of population belonging to the social risk group, were receiving state allowances. Number of allowances assigned by different government resolutions reached to 26 in the period from 1992 to 1998. Starting from January, 1999 a system of family allowances was introduced.

Number of families, receiving family allowances

including

- families with children

Labor force

Current situation in the labor market proves that no significant changes has occurred in the field of employment. Indicators of unemployment rate have stayed on the same level. Even more, number of long-term unemployed is increasing. As it is known, they are considered to be the most at risk group for poverty. Besides, long-term unemployment results in employment migration.

Number of people involved in economy,

Number of unemployed,

including :

- youth,

Income from the employment.

2. The picture on child and family well-being

1. As of 1999, main indicators of social and economic conditions of the Republic of Armenia are characterized by the data provided below:

	1999ã.	1999ã. â % ê 1998ã.
GDP in market prices, billion drams	991.5	103.3
Volume of industrial output, billion drams	280.9	105.2
Production of consumer goods, billion drams	145.2	104.4
Gross product of agriculture , billion drams	311.7	101.3
Dwellings put in place, thousand of m ²	190.4	66.4
Freight turnover of public transport, million tones/km	2052.9	81.3
Average salary of an employee, drams	18464	119.2
Monetary income of population, billion drams	627.1	113.6
Monetary expenditures of population, billion drams	631.7	114.6
Volume of retail goods turnover, billion drams	382.1	107.7
Volume of paid services provided to population, billion drams	167.1	101.0
Index of consumer prices	X	100.6

Decline of GDP growth in 1999 was mainly conditioned with decline in the field of agriculture and capital investments (as well as in the field of construction) increase of measures of subsidies and at the same time reduction of growth of tax revenues. At the same time some positive changes are observed in the field of economy. Considerable growth is observed in one of the main branches of economy- industry. (growth in 1999 accounted for 105.2% against 97.5% in 1998). Considerable growth is observed in the field of trade (including whole sale) – 109.8%. Some increase in VAT was achieved due to the industry of transport and communication (mainly the latter).

2. *Indicators of the labor market*

200.3 thousand of unemployed were registered at the Republican Center of Labor and Employment by the end of 1999, out of which 87.4% received the status of unemployed. Their number has increased by 30.8% as compared to the corresponding period of the previous year.

In the beginning of 1999, 81.0 thousand people have received the status of unemployed, 39.9 thousand people were excluded from the register, out of them 26.8 % due to finding employment, 0.3% due to pre-term retiring, all the others – due to other reasons.

95.0 % of unemployed are concentrated in urban areas, out of which 28.7% - in Yerevan, 16.7% - in Guimry and 8.8% - in Vanadzor.

Women comprise 4.4% of the total number of unemployed. Their proportion in the total number of unemployed has a tendency of decreasing. As compared to December, 1998 it has decreased by 5.0 percent.

Composition of the unemployed based on their sex, age and education as of December, 1999.

	Percentage of unemployed against the total number	
	Total	Women
Total number of unemployed	100	100
Including, by age		
From 18	1.3	1.2
18-22	7.9	8.1
22-30	21.9	21.9
30-50	60.0	61.3
50+	8.9	7.5
By education level:		
Higher	11.5	11.2
Secondary specialized	23.0	22.9
General secondary	58.4	59.9
Unfinished secondary	7.1	6.0

^{*)} Data source: Republican Center for Labor and Employment of the RoA.

10702 people became employed in 1999, among them 91.1% were unemployed. The unemployment period for 6.3% of people now employed lasted from 1-3 months in December 1999, from 3 to 6 months for 8.5% and from 6 to 12 months for 16.8% , 12 and more for 68.5%. Average duration of unemployment (starting from the moment of registration to the moment of becoming employed) was 14.3 months. The low effectiveness in identifying job opportunities for the citizens seeking employment through employment services is proved by the fact that there have been 253 applications for one vacancy during December 1999.

There is a professional discrepancy existing in the labor market between the demand and supply of labor force. The average duration of unemployment in December, 1999 was 13.3 months. It has decreased by 0.8 months as compared to the corresponding month of the previous year.

Number of unemployed in the Republic receiving allowances in December, 1999, was 30.5 thousand, and the average size of allowances was 3091 drams.

Unemployment rate estimated as the ratio between the number of registered unemployed and the economically active population (employed and unemployed) was 11.6% in December, 1999. As compared to the previous month it has increased by 0.1%, and by 2.7% as compared to the corresponding month of the previous year. Indicators, showing economical activity of population.

In per cent

	Level of economic activity of the population ¹⁾		Employment rate ²⁾		Unemployment rate ³⁾	
	1999	1998	1999	1998	1999	1998
Total	65.9	65.6	88.9	90.6	11.1	9.4

1) Percentage of economically active population against labor resources .

2) Percentage of employed population against economically active population.

3) Percentage of unemployed against economically active population.

Unemployment rate in urban areas from January to December, 1999 accounted for 18.1%. In the years between 1996 and 1999 it was fluctuating from 15.3% to 18.1%. The main information source is the Republican Center for Labor and Employment. According to the law “About Employment ” persons under 16 and over that are not employed, had applied for employment to the Republican Center of Labor and Employment, had more than one year work experience are considered to be unemployed. In this case those who don’t have employment, are seeking employment and are capable to start employment are excluded from this group of unemployed as either they are not capable to work due to their age or do not have enough work experience.

The alternative assessment of the labor force that was based on the methodology of the International Organization of Labor, according to which every citizen irrespective of his/her age, and the kind of employment he/she is seeking is considered unemployed, proves that the unemployed mainly are not registered at the Centers for Labor and Employment, but instead they prefer to find employment through their relatives, thus remaining non-registered. The above mentioned fact proves that in the result of alternative assessment of the labor force conducted in November, 1999 and December, 1997 the actual unemployment rate in urban areas accounted for 29.1% in 1996, and 36.4% in 1997.

According to the assessments, average number of economically active population from January, 1999 to December, 1999 accounted for 1484.3 thousand people, out of which 88.9% was involved in economy, 11.1% were permanently unemployed or registered at the Republican Center for Labor and Employment of the RoA and had received the status of unemployed.

Description of the economically active population in 1999.

Total		Including:			
Thous. People	in % against the corresponding period of the last year	Employed		Officially registered unemployed	
		Thous. people	in % against the corresponding period of the last year	Thous people	in% against the corresponding period of the last year
1484.3	100.5	1320.1	98.7	164.2	118.0

It is estimated that 70.6% of the total employed population is involved in the private sector, 28.9% in the public sector and in the field of management, 1.0% in NGOs and religious organizations and foundations.

Proportion of employed in public sector and in the field of management against the total number of employed population from December to January 1999 has reduced by 1.9% . As to the private sector, there is an opposite picture: it has increased by 3.3% . It is worth mentioning that number of employed in the government sector has decreased by 7.5% against the last year, while in the private sector (excluding the self-employed and those employed in farms) has increased by 11.2%. Thus, employment in public sector is decreasing, while in the private sector it is increasing. Employment in farms covers the main part of private sector. Currently private sector is considered to be the field attracting labor force that results in hidden employment, especially among the self-employed, but at the same time this type of employment is not stable.

Life standards.

Poverty, existing in all the countries with transition economy, and Armenia as well, greatly differs from the poverty of other countries of the world. First of all, it happened considerably unexpected, and secondly, poverty in transition countries is connected with low income, as the education and cultural level of population is rather high. However, the expectations for quick transformation and economic growth didn't come true. Deepening and on-going economic crisis had negative impact on such social indicators like health, education level, housing conditions, crime.

With the objective of studying population life standards in transition period and identifying measures of poverty, its structures and reasons, the Department of Statistics, State Register and Analysis of the Republic of Armenia conducted research of the households. The research was conducted with technical assistance provided by the World Bank in one month period in 1996. The Sampling consisted of 5040 households. Sampling was done in a manner that allowed equal probability to all households to be part of cluster. Sampling covered all territories of the Republic. Based on the results of the research, the evaluation of poverty was done through a methodology meeting international standards.

It was estimated that :

Not poor in the Republic accounted for 45.3%,

Poor - 27%,

Very poor – 27.7%.

Based on these assessments, approximately 1.7-1.8 million people turned out to be poor in the Republic, out of which 800-900 thousand - very poor.

Very poor are considered those households that have per capita expenditures below the food line. Poor are considered to be households with average per capita expenditures below the minimum consumer basket. Extended and multi-children families are most at risk for poverty.

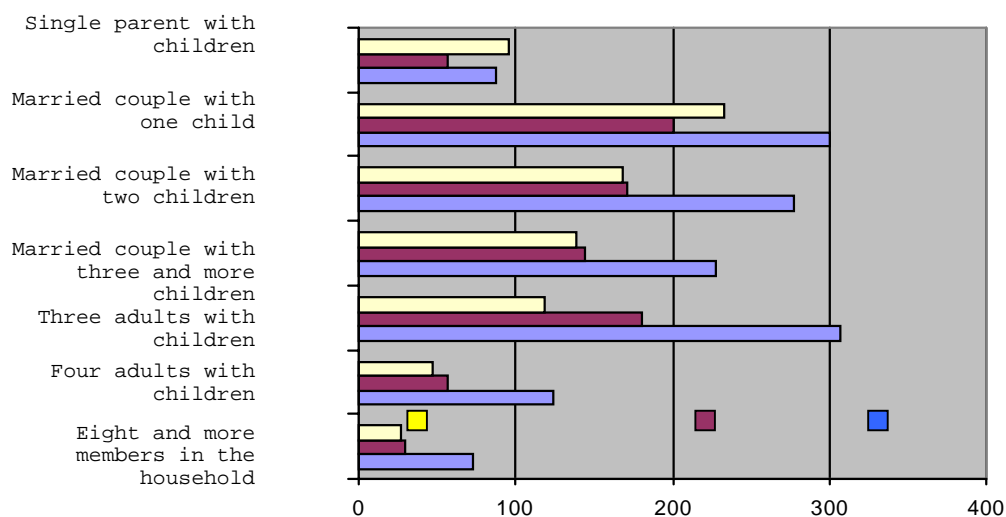
Poverty risk depends on the household structure and number of dependents. Households with children under seven and with three and more children, as well as extended households are most at risk for poverty. The average household consists of 3.9 people, while the poor households - of 4.1 people, and the extremely poor - 4.5. Extremely poor households had heavier burden of children (1.55 against 1.07 for not

poor households). The extremely poor comprise 20.7% among the married couples with one child, and 27.3% among those with three and more children.

Greatest poverty is observed in households with eight and more members. Extreme poor among these households comprise 40.2%, poor - 23.4% and not poor – only 36.4% .

Very often households with children under seven fall in the group of the extremely poor, even more than childless families. 33% of households with children under seven were in the extremely poor situation.

Regression analysis describes that existence of one child in the family increases the poverty by 6.9% as compared to the childless families.



For many years birth rate in Armenia had exceeded the average rate registered in the Soviet Union, but it was always lower than in the Republics of Middle Asia and Azerbaijan. However during the recent years, with the decline of life standards of the population, the tendency of birth rate reduction and decrease of number of young generation was observed.

With decline of life standards benefits were introduced for children to support families. But the sizes of benefits were so small (1200 drams or 18% of the food basket) that they had symbolic character.

Decline of per capita income and sudden changes of prices decreased the consumption of products in the course of previous years and sharpened the food inadequacy. One third of the population in the Republic living in rural areas, use self-produced food. The people from urban areas comprise 2/3 of the total population of the Republic, are more inclined to storing seasonal food products.

In the result of survey it turned out that more than 50% of daily expenditures goes on food. For the poorest it comprises 73%, while for the most well off families it is only 31%. Low-income households are characterized with less consumption of food products and acute food inadequacy.

The most common food product is considered to be bread and cereals, potatoes and oil. Meat, dairy products, fruits and vegetables are the most rarely used products. 65% of calories were covered by bread and cereals.

Average weight of children from the age of two to five, living in extremely poor households, was less than the weight of the children of the same age living in not poor households.

Based on the data of integrated research of the households, (sample size 3600 households), conducted in 1989-1999 and supported by the World Bank, the measures of poverty in Armenia have remained the same, e.g. 55% population is below poverty line, 45% of population are not poor. The same groups of people and households are most at risk for poverty.

	Household size	Children at the age of 0 to 14 for one household	Aged people at the age of 60 and above for one household
Not poor	3.83	0.93	0.55
Poor	4.52	1.33	0.62
Very poor	5.13	1.69	0.69
Total	4.29	1.19	0.60

One of the important indicators for life standards is considered to be access to such social services as health care, education, housing condition, and improved housing fund.

The problem of people suffered in the result of crisis in the field of health care and higher education system, becomes one of the most acute problems of the society.

Health care.

4.1. The process of transition brings forth a lot of problems connected with poverty and social hardships.

Based on the data provided by public statistics, morbidity reduction was observed in the population in the years of 1990- 1994. In 1989 35702.6 patients with diagnosis were registered per 100 thousand people , while in 1994 only 18851.4. Starting from 1994 morbidity started to increase and in 1996 it reached to 21081.0 per 100 thousand people .

Morbidity rate in 1996 as compared to the previous year, was 6.4%. However, for some kinds of diseases the growth of morbidity rate exceeded the average growth indicator of the Republic. For example, morbidity by infectious and parasitic diseases increased by 38.1%, digestive disorder by 35.1%, neonatal, childbearing and post birth period by 29.9%, psychiatric disorders by 12.1%.

Specific data analysis of the health care was performed in 1996, (978 households, 3498 interviewed) people from both well-off households and vulnerable ones have been equally ill in one year period. In case of serious health problems the main cause of the illness was identified to be insufficient nutrition, (36%), difficult conditions of the family (23%), age (14%), professional diseases and ecology (9%), food poisoning (3%). However only half of the patients had applied to the doctor. The main reasons for not receiving treatment was the high cost of medical care. The poor rarely used the medical services in case of illness and mainly relied on self-treatment.

In per cent

	Number of patients in 1996				Number of people applied	Number of people informing about their expenditures in health care
	Total	Including				
		women	Children under 5	Children from 6-14		
Not poor	38.9	53.8	8.8	13.7	44.9	39.4
Poor	32.0	52.7	8.7	21.4	37.0	27.7
Extremely poor	32.3	52.1	12.7	16.0	29.0	22.5
Total	35.6	53.2	9.7	15.9	39.6	33.0

The results of the survey proved that the population had access to mainly free health care facilities (69%). However, about the quarter of population (24%) had attended paid health facilities.

In spite of the fact that all groups of population, irrespective of their income, had access to paid health facilities, it was observed that better-off layers of population had applied to paid health facilities two times more than the less well-off layers.

4.2. *Child mortality rates in Armenia during 1980-1999.*

Armenia has average child mortality rates.

Infant mortality per 1000 live-birth

	1980	1985	1990	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Total	26.2	24.8	18.5	14.2	15.5	15.4	14.7	15.4
Boys	27.7	25.5	20.5	15.7	17.3	17.2	16.4	17.2
Girls	24.5	23.9	16.1	12.6	13.6	13.4	12.8	13.4

Though child mortality rates were reduced in the previous years, that indicator is still high as compared to average rate in European countries (8.21 per 1000 live-birth).

Infant (age of 0-1) mortality in Armenia
During the years of 1987-1999 per 1000 live-birth

	1987-1989	1990-1992	1993-1995	1996-1999	Ñ
Armenia	26.2	18.3	15.5	15.3	8.21

Age and causes of infant mortality.

	1988	1990	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Infant mortality (age of 0-1 per 1000 live-birth)	25.3	18.5	14.2	15.5	15.4	14.7	15.4
Including perinatal death (0-6 days old) per 1000 live birth	17.7	16.0	13.3	15.4	14.9	15.6	15.7
Child mortality age (proportion in the entire structure of infant mortality) in the early neonatal period, in percents	36.8	38.2	45.8	50.6	49.9	57.4	51.0
Including: general neonatal, in percents	45.2	49.0	52.9	58.8	59.7	64.3	58.2
Post neonatal, in percents	54.8	51.0	47.1	41.2	40.3	35.7	41.8
Infant mortality causes (per1000 live birth)							
Respiratory diseases	6.0	4.8	3.2	3.4	2.7	2.5	3.3
Intestinal diseases	2.6	2.2	1.7	1.8	2.4	1.7	1.8
Perinatal diseases	10.2	6.1	5.7	7.1	6.9	7.0	6.3
Congenital Malformations	2.5	2.5	2.4	1.9	2.5	2.7	3.4
Mortality causes (proportion in the total mortality rate)							
Respiratory diseases	24.1	25.9	21.8	21.8	17.7	17.1	21.0
Intestinal diseases	10.3	11.9	11.6	11.5	15.3	11.7	11.2
Perinatal diseases	40.3	33.3	38.4	46.1	44.8	47.6	40.4
Congenital Malformations	9.9	13.5	16.3	12.2	16.2	18.1	21.5
Other disorders and causes	15.4	15.4	11.9	8.4	6.0	5.5	5.9

Child mortality under 5 per 1000 live birth (1980-1999)

	1980	1985	1990	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Total	37.38	34.69	23.7	19.9	19.5	19.5	18.4	16.9
Boys	39.38	35.41	26.2	21.1	21.4	21.2	19.5	17.9
Girls	35.28	33.95	21.2	18.5	17.3	17.6	17.0	15.6

4.3. Liberalization of the society created new opportunities for youth development. But at the same time it created new risk factors, such as increase of sexually transmitted diseases. Traditionally low level of morbidity of these diseases was conditioned by cultural and social specifics of the country. Morbidity rates among the juveniles has increased in line with the adults. In the years between 1990 and 1999 number of women infected with syphilis was increased by 4.2 and by 3 times among men. The incidence rates of chlamidiasis increased by 2.2 in the period of three years (1997 - 1999). More detailed description of morbidity rate with sexually transmitted diseases by age groups between the years of 1990 and 1999 is given below:

Incidence rates

	1990	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Incidence rates of syphilis among women	54	251	364	328	309	227
Including rates by age groups:						
10 - 14 years	1	2	5	1	4	6
15 - 17 years	3	7	7	8	4	2
18 - 19 years	6	17	8	21	10	7
Incidence rates of syphilis among men	71	197	293	303	188	213
Including rates by age groups:						
10 - 14 years	---	6	2	1	9	8
15 - 17 years	2	3	1	3	1	2
18 - 19 years	4	11	28	40	17	15
Incidence rates of gonorrhea among women	456	509	634	248	547	513
Including rates by age groups:						
10 - 14 years	2	3	5	7	---	---
15 - 17 years	16	37	7	8	2	2
18 - 19 years	57	49	72	23	155	27
Incidence rates of gonorrhea among men	597	815	795	802	568	409
Including rates by age groups						
10 - 14 years	---	1	2	---	---	---
15 - 17 years	12	28	7	15	4	5
18 - 19 years	37	71	81	65	104	24
Incidence rates of chlamidiasis	---	---	---	153	228	343
Incidence rates in the age group of 15-19	---	---	---	...	9	25
Including rates among women aged 15 - 19	---	---	---	...	1	2

5. Education .

Previous state education system used to be a positive example of the former system, but currently parents can not rely on its effectiveness and coverage of all education related problems. Currently families have to pay for a lot of services that before were included in the free education. Increases of education costs result in the fact that many of the children from poor families face the problem of access to education and extracurricular activities in the school, as well as supplementary classes including foreign languages.

Below are data on changes of children enrollment rates in basic education estimated as ratio between the number of students from 1-8 grades and number of population aged from 7-14.

(in per cent)

	1989	1990	1995	1999
Ratio of children's enrollment	95.5	94.6	81.4	81.9

According to the survey of households, enrollment in education in 1996 by different surveyed age groups (7-11, 12-14, 15-16) was on the same level for everybody irrespective of the financial conditions of the households. In higher grades of the secondary school enrollment by the students from poor households was a little lower. There are more drop outs from higher classes among boys than among girls, as they often leave to continue their studies in specialized institutions or to find employment due to the bad financial situation of the households. Almost all the children have access to secondary education, while only children from well-off households have access to higher education. Access to higher education establishments for children from poor households is by 1.8 times less than it is for children from well-of households. It is described in the chart below.

(in per cent)

	Enrollment rate in education establishments				
	From 7-11	from 12-14	from 15-16	from 17-25	Total
Not poor	98	99	91	29	70
Poor	97	100	93	22	71
Extremely poor	97	97	88	16	67
Total	97	99	91	24	69

With transition to market economy the household expenditures increased for education. It was observed for all the households, irrespective of their financial conditions, starting from primary school. Not poor households usually could better afford education expenses than poor and extremely poor ones, and mainly children from not poor households used to take private classes. Expenditures per child in primary and secondary education for better-off households exceeded those of extremely poor by 4-5 times, for higher education-by 13 times. Average expenditures of households per child are described in the chart below:

	Average expenditures per child, in drams			
	Primary school	Secondary school	Private classes	Higher educational establishments
Not poor	2758	3492	4130	34932
Poor	1227	1465	1287	2387
Extremely poor	759	732	2021	2642
Total	2009	2340	3397	28929

Based on the data provided through integrated survey of 3600 households, (July 1998 - June 1999) education level of the population at the age of 15 and over is presented in the chart below:

(per 1000 people of corresponding age)

	Urban & rural population	Urban population	Rural population
Total number of people with higher and secondary (finished and unfinished) education	941	961	913
Including:			
higher and finished	150	204	71
Higher and unfinished	37	51	17
Secondary specialized	226	242	204
General secondary	376	339	431
Unfinished secondary	152	125	190

In spite of the fact that currently paid system of education is developed, the data of integrated survey of the households revealed that the majority of school age children (99.3%) have attended free state schools.

During the academic year 12% of the students have taken private, paid classes on such subjects like math, (35.1%), Armenian language (16.8%), foreign language (12.0%), music (15.2%) and others. Monthly charges for private classes in majority of cases were fluctuating from 1000 to 10000 drams, in the remaining cases it went up to 65000 drams. Thus, children from vulnerable families do not have access to private classes. Practice of private classes is widespread in the urban areas.

Besides the parents face some inevitable expenditures such as students' textbooks, transport, clothes, school supplies, etc that make a considerable amount for a month, and which makes up more than 3000 drams per student (from those above mentioned education expenses).

Only 7.3% of students have got some kind of assistance in school during the academic year, mainly textbooks (68.9% from the total amount of those received assistance), food (11%), milk (8.9%), clothes (6.2%) and others.

6. Social protection system

The growing deterioration of economy of the Republic of Armenia, starting from 1992, brought forth the importance of establishment of a new system of government

support to the population that would somehow improve the social conditions of the people.

The only and satisfying factor for eligibility to government subsidies was a person's possession to a specific "social risk group" (some categories of teenagers, disabled, pensioners and others). By 1998 in the result of adoption of different Resolutions by the Government, the number of government **subsidies** made 26.

According to the Resolution N 172 as of 13 June 1997 of Government of Armenia "About Government **subsidies (benefits?)** that are assigned to specific categories of children, single mothers, persons with children under two", children under 18 belonging to the following categories were assigned subsidies:

Disabled children,
 Children of single mothers,
 Orphan children (from single parent families and orphans),
 Refugee children, living in temporary housing,
 Children from households living in the earthquake zone in temporary housing,
 Children from households, having four and more under age children
 children from households having three and more under age children and living in Gyumri, Spitak and Vanadzor,
 children under two whose mothers are on partially paid vacations.

Starting from 1999 system of family subsidies was introduced by the government in the Republic. Taking into account the scarce resources of the government, the problem of accuracy in addressing the social assistance becomes crucial. With this respect classification of the households by the level of vulnerability is very important as it brings to identification of quantitative characteristics of the poverty level for each individual household.

Youth crime rates

Deterioration of economic conditions, lack of social support for juveniles in the important period of their life between the school and work, as well as family problems result in the growth of juvenile crime rate. Risk for crime among the underage is increased in the result of decreased opportunities for continuing their studies or fewer job opportunities. However, the growth of crime rate in the Republic is limited. Armenia always was a country with low crime rate.

Below is presented data on crime rates in the Republic in the period of 1989-1999.

(cases)

	1989	1990	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Total number of reported crime in the country	8415	12110	10140	12479	12355	10761	10056
Out of which:							
Number of violent crime	377	483	1109	1354	566	625	679
Number of murder	88	178	116	114	100	93	90
Crime against children and youth	48	55	56	22	22	14	49
Number of non-payment of alimony			13	22	22	1	2
Number of cases of							

	1989	1990	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
crimes by juveniles or with juvenile participation	243	256	384	448	655	526	588
Out of them:							
Number of murders by juveniles			4	3	8	7	5
Out of them:							
Number of murders by male juveniles			4	3	8	7	5

Proportion of juvenile crime or crime with participation of juveniles in the total number of reported crime in the country changed from 2.9% as of 1989 to 5.8% as of 1999, while their absolute number in the same period increased by 2.4 times. At the same time, number of verdicts on juvenile crime increased by 1.5 times in the period from 1989 to 1999.

Number of juveniles sentenced decreased by 2.8 times over the last decade.

(people)

	1989	1990	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Total number of the convicted for criminal offences	4396	3906	6268	6763	7084	6435	6536
Out of them:							
Number of juveniles	116	133	297	364	429	284	331
Out of them:							
convicted males	114	130	285	355	417	281	320
Total number of convicted for criminal offences	3685	2820	5898	7121	7689	6596	1340
Out of them:							
Number of males convicted	138	100	67	95	86	41	50
Total number of children in correction and punitive institutions	...	...	...	...	...	...	50

Actual youth crime rate seems to be higher as not all the cases are reported to official bodies. The majority of reported juvenile crime are destruction to property . Growth of crime rates can be conditioned with a number of factors: poverty, parents' divorce, lack of oversight by the parents, absence at school, alcohol and drug abuse. But the greatest risk for growth of crime rate underlies in lack of job opportunities and opportunities for continuing studies.

3. Children in public care

Transition from centralized planned economy to free market relations resulted not only in decline of life standards, but also in widespread poverty and polarization of society. The most negative impact it had on children. Former Armenia (in the period of Soviet Union) was distinguished with low number of children in special institutions and lack of homeless children, especially children beggars. Worshipping children was typical of Armenian families, while currently under the influence of economic crisis, interfamily links have been weakened, because of which children greatly suffered. Homeless and beggar children emerged, and the number of children in institutions drastically increased. Especially vulnerable are considered those children, that are not able to live with their parents because of being rejected by their parents, becoming orphans or because of lack of oversight by their parents, as well as poverty. Giving these children to the public support bears a danger of promoting complete breakup of family links.

The current situation resulted in establishment of different non-governmental organizations, entitled to improve children's conditions. Below is presented information about that kind of two organizations, though there are many other similar organizations in the Republic.

With the support of Armenian Relief Fund a Center of Admission and Orientation of children was established that started its activities since February 9, 2000. The Center provides shelter for children living without adult guardianship and education (poor, beggars, homeless, separated). The center can accommodate 30 children. Starting from February 9 to October 30 the Center has served to 214 children from the age of 3 to 18. The children reside in the center approximately for one month, in some cases even more than a month, during which a group of specialists performs a comprehensive study of the causes of remaining without guardianship and education. The child's personal file is given to the community committees dealing in underage affairs. Within eight months of work 67% of the children served by the center were sent back to their families with the perspective of further support to be received by the education system and the community (boarding schools, psychologist services, centers dealing with children's problems) and 33% of these children were accommodated in institutions (children's homes, special education institutions).

Institute of Trustees is a new initiative in Armenia. This is the reason that only one child was temporarily placed in its care before making the final decision.

The main reason of taking children to that center is the existence of beggar and street children. Recently increase in the number of cases of leaving children without parent guardianship is observed. The study of these families shows that majority of children admitted by the center are from vulnerable families, though there are other factors as well that promote the phenomenon of street children.

Benevolent NGO "Orran" was founded in April, 2000. Main activities of the NGO "Orran" are the following:

- Devert vulnerable children from the streets
- Prevent the increase in the number of the poor.
- Provide assistance to the vulnerable families

To implement these objectives the members of the organization implement the following activities:

- provide children with food,
- assist in doing their homework,
- provide medical and psychological assistance,
- provide access to spiritual values,
- provide sociologist's services.

Changes in the number of children in public care, different kinds of government and non-government organizations within the last ten years, are presented below:

*Accommodation of children at risk group in institution
(people)*

	1989	1990	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Total number of children in public care	303	365	705	801	1042	1023	1474
Number of children in children's homes	60	54	60	65	63	65	65
Number of children in orphanages and boarding houses	100	126	263	300	363	334	516
Number of physically and mentally children in institutions	143	185	336	376	541	544	528
Number of children in public care in other institutions	...	...	46	60	75	80	365
Number of children not in public care	...	30	64	89	...	77	88

Number of children under public care has increased about five times over the recent ten years, and by three times under the care of non-governmental institutions. The indicator illustrating number of adopted children was undergoing fluctuations. In 1989 (right after the devastating earthquake) indicator was the highest over the last decade (538 children) , in 1993 it dropped to 168 children (the year of severe energetic crisis and drastic decline of economy). In 1995 the number of adopted children almost reached the level of 1989, but then started to decline, and in 1999 it declined almost by two times as compared to 1995.