

FACT SHEET:

CHILDREN'S BUDGET 2024



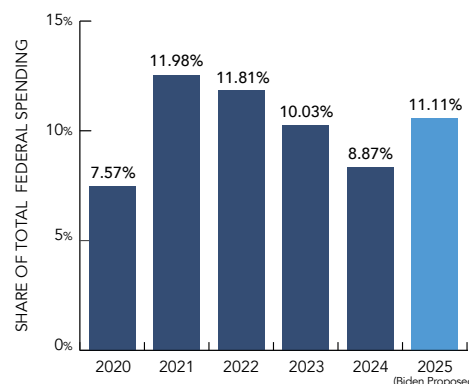
The **Children's Budget** provides a comprehensive analysis of the share of spending allocated to kids over more than 250 government programs in the federal budget. This analysis tracks domestic and international spending on children, including both mandatory and discretionary funding across nearly every federal department, representing numerous agencies and bureaus. First Focus on Children has published an annual Children's Budget for more than 15 years.

Children's Budget 2024 finds that the share of U.S. federal spending on children fell to 8.87% in Fiscal Year 2024, representing the third straight year of decline. Both mandatory and discretionary spending for children fell in FY 2024 as a share of the federal budget.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, more U.S. lawmakers prioritized children in their funding decisions, pushing the share of federal spending on children to a record high of nearly 12% in FY 2021. Since then, Congress has clawed back most of these wins for children, resulting in a steady three-year decline in both total dollars and share of spending allocated to kids in the federal budget.

In FY 2024, lawmakers spent \$18.396 billion less on children than in FY 2023, amounting to an inflation-adjusted decline of 5.59%--- although this figure represents an improvement over the double-digit declines of FY 2022 and FY 2023. Investments in children's programs abroad account for a mere 0.09% of the total federal budget. This continued systematic disinvestment in the nation's children has visibly damaged their health and well-being. According to U.S. Census Bureau data,¹ child poverty more than doubled in 2022 compared to 2021, with the rate of children living in poverty increasing from 5.2% to 12.4% and rose to 13.7% in 2023. The U.S. infant mortality rate in 2022, which already was much higher than in other wealthy nations, increased for the first time in two decades.² Millions of children are losing health care. Nearly 5 million children have lost access to Medicaid³ through the unwinding process. Global vaccination rates for children have fallen to 2008 levels,⁴ with long-forgotten diseases including measles and polio surging in the United States for the first time in decades.

Children's Combined Share (Domestic and International) of Total Spending



Combined (Domestic and International) Spending on Children

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Biden 2025
Spending Level on Children	\$ 496.419 B	\$ 817.110 B	\$ 701.413 B	\$ 618.652 B	\$ 600.256 B	\$ 778.886 B
Real Change from Prior Year	16.12%	59.36%	-20.46%	-16.07%	-5.59%	26.57%
Share of Total Federal Spending	7.57%	11.98%	11.81%	10.03%	8.87%	11.11%

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This current disinvestment is especially alarming in comparison to funding levels during the coronavirus pandemic when the federal government increased investments in children and proved a better future for children was possible.

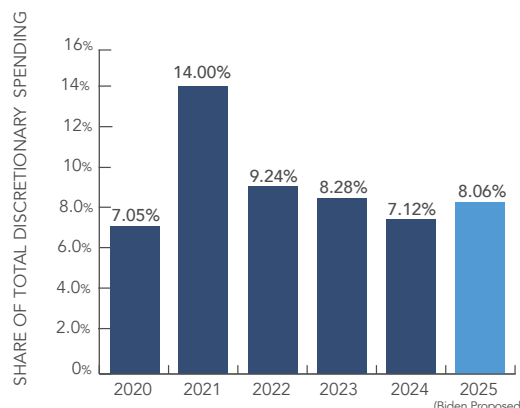
The COVID-19 public health emergency spurred a surge of investment in children with historic temporary improvements to programs including the Child Tax Credit (CTC) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), as well as other timely measures such as economic impact payments. In FY 2022, economic impact payments ended, the expansion of the Child Care and Development Block Grant was phased out, and improvements to the Child Tax Credit expired. In FY 2023 and 2024, lawmakers eliminated multiple large investments in childhood nutrition.

Rapid reductions in pandemic-era programs continued to drive the decline in funding for children in FY 2024. The elimination of Pandemic EBT and the expiration of emergency allotments in SNAP represented the two largest drivers, with those programs alone reducing funding for children by \$33.609 billion. Other notable declines include the discretionary portion of the Education Stabilization Fund, the Emergency Connectivity Fund, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program. The end of these pandemic-related investments reduced the share of the federal budget going to children to just 8.87% in FY 2024 - more than a quarter off the FY 2021 high of 11.98%.

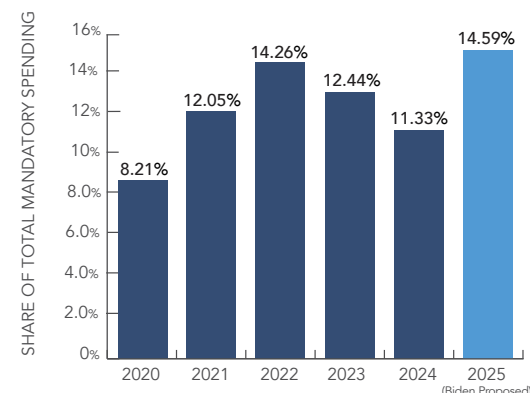
International Spending on Children

International spending on children makes up a dramatically smaller share of the federal budget, with total spending equaling approximately 1/100th of domestic spending on kids. Spending on international children's programs accounts for a mere 0.09% of the total federal budget and only 10.16% of spending internationally in FY 2024.

Children's Share of Total Discretionary Domestic Spending



Children's Share of Total Mandatory Domestic Spending



CHILDREN'S BUDGET 2024

Total Spending on International Children's Programs

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Biden 2025
Spending Level	\$ 5.46 B	\$ 5.73 B	\$ 5.96 B	\$ 6.34 B	\$ 6.18 B	\$ 6.51 B
Share of International Spending on Children	9.51%	8.02%	8.96%	8.30%	10.56%	11.08%
Share of Total Federal Spending	0.08%	0.08%	0.10%	0.10%	0.09%	0.09%

The President's FY 2025 Budget

President Biden's budget for FY 2025 offers a glimmer of hope for a better future for kids, increasing spending on children by nearly \$200 billion. By far the largest driver of this increase would be the expanded refundability of the Child Tax Credit, which would provide an additional \$186 billion to families with kids, especially those who currently receive less than the full credit or no credit at all because their parents' income is too low. This increase—totaling 648%—along with other key investments would raise the share of federal spending on kids to 11.11%, a large improvement but still below the investment reached by the pandemic policy response.

Key Takeaways for Children's Budget 2024

- FY 2024 marked the third straight year that overall spending on children and the share of federal spending on children declined, falling from a high of 11.98% all the way down to 8.87%—meaning children lost more than a quarter of their share of federal funding over this period.
- Children fell even further behind when accounting for inflation—for the third straight year spending on children failed to keep up with inflation.
- The expiration of nutrition program expansions during the pandemic—including SNAP emergency allotments and Pandemic EBT—were the main drivers of the decline in children's funding in FY 2024.
- Education funding has increased dramatically from FY 2020 to FY 2024. However, this is entirely the result of temporary Education Stabilization Funds which will phase out, withdrawing needed support for public schools, over the next few years. Without this temporary funding, spending on children's education would have remained roughly flat since FY 2020.
- Investments in children's health programs represent a bright spot in the Federal Budget, with the share of federal spending increasing by nearly a third from FY 2020 to FY 2024.
- The President's Budget Request for FY 2025 would increase spending on children by 26.57% adjusted for inflation. By far the largest driver of this increase would be a \$186 billion dollar increase in the Child Tax Credit.

ENDNOTES

1. Shrider, Emily. "Poverty in the United States: 2023." United States Census Bureau, 10 Sept. 2024, www.census.gov/library/publications/2024/demo/p60-283.html.
2. Ely, Danielle, and Anne Driscoll. Vital Statistics Rapid Release Infant Mortality in the United States: Provisional Data from the 2022 Period Linked Birth/Infant Death File. Nov. 2023.
3. "How Many Children Are Losing Medicaid?" Center for Children and Families, 27 Sept. 2023, ccf.georgetown.edu/2023/09/27/how-many-children-are-losing-medicaid Accessed 22 Oct. 2024.
4. "Vaccination and Immunization Statistics - UNICEF DATA." UNICEF DATA, 15 July 2024, data.unicef.org/topic/child-health/immunization Accessed 22 Oct. 2024.