



2008 Children's Defense Fund Action Council®  
Nonpartisan Congressional  
Scorecard Highlights

Children's Defense Fund  
Action Council®

# Scorecard Highlights

## 2008 Children's Defense Fund Action Council® Nonpartisan Congressional Scorecard

How well do your Members of Congress protect children? Once again, that's the question asked by the *Children's Defense Fund Action Council 2008 Annual Congressional Scorecard*. We tracked votes that Senators and Representatives cast on important policies affecting children and families last year, and each Member of Congress received a score based on how often his or her votes helped protect or hurt children. To see detailed descriptions of the votes we scored, as well as the scores for all Members of Congress, visit [www.cdfactioncouncil.org](http://www.cdfactioncouncil.org).

### How Well Did Your Members of Congress Protect Children?

“The test of the morality of a society is what it does for its children.”

—German Protestant Theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer

#### Scorecard Highlights

- The 2008 scores for Members of Congress generally were higher than in past years, indicating some interest to increase investments in children. However, fewer than one-third of all Senators scored 100 percent and almost one-fourth scored 50 percent or below. Eighteen Senators failed to make a passing grade of 60 percent or higher.
- In the House of Representatives, Members on average had a passing score, but only 166 (38 percent) scored 100 percent, and 98 (22 percent) scored 50 percent or below. Ninety-eight Representatives failed to make a passing grade of 60 percent or higher.
- It is notable that 14 of the 23 Members of the House of Representatives who were defeated in the November 2008 election voted for children less than 70 percent of the time in 2007.

#### What Congress Did Right in 2008

As the Scorecard shows, Members of Congress did advance or protect the interests of children and their families in some important areas in 2008. Bills were passed to help young people pay for college, end discrimination in the delivery of mental health care, increase safety standards for children's toys, expand food stamps and other nutrition programs, and extend unemployment benefits.

Two very significant bills that passed without recorded votes will improve the lives of children in foster care and in the juvenile justice system. The *Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act* increases the likelihood that extended family can care permanently for children in foster care or at risk of entering foster care. The *Second Chance Act* helps adults and juveniles returning to their families and communities after incarceration in juvenile facilities, prisons or jails. Both bills make important investments in children, re-directing young people from the pipeline to prison into a pipeline to productive employment.

#### What Congress Did Wrong in 2008

Although some gains were made in 2008, Congress failed to address many enormous needs facing our children.

- While more than 13 million children continue to live in poverty 5.8 million of them in extreme poverty Congress took no action to reduce child poverty.

- Nine million children are uninsured, but the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress failed to pass any legislation to cover more children. Fortunately, the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress did pass an expansion of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), which could cover four million of the nine million uninsured children.
- Only three percent of eligible children are in Early Head Start and just over half of eligible children are in Head Start, but funds for these important programs were not increased.
- Despite the high rates of child abuse and neglect, Congress took no steps to reduce them.
- Despite the fact that a Black boy born in 2001 has a 1 in 3 chance of going to prison in his lifetime, Congress did not reauthorize the *Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act*.

We can do much better in 2009. We have an historic national opportunity to step forward to ensure a level playing field for *every* child, always remembering that every step we take to improve the lives of children improves the lives of all of us. This is certainly a transformative moment in American history with a President committed to raising significantly the levels of public investment in early intervention, early childhood development, education and workforce development. We have every expectation that Congress will be an active partner with President Obama to champion the interests of children.

This online Scorecard provides details about the actions taken by your Members of Congress in 2008. We urge you to communicate regularly with them to share your expectation that they will vote to advance or protect the interests of our most vulnerable children and their families. To contact your Member of Congress, go to [www.cdfactioncouncil.org](http://www.cdfactioncouncil.org).



# Best and Worst State Congressional Delegations for Children

## Best State Delegations for Children

State	State Delegation Average	Rank
Hawaii	100%	1
Connecticut	97%	2
North Dakota	97%	2
Maine	95%	4
Massachusetts	93%	5
Montana	93%	5
South Dakota	93%	5
Vermont	93%	5
Oregon	91%	9
New York	90%	10
Arkansas	90%	10
Rhode Island	90%	10
West Virginia	90%	10

## Worst State Delegations for Children

State	State Delegation Average	Rank
Tennessee	65%	41
Texas	61%	42
Idaho	60%	43
Nebraska	60%	43
Oklahoma	60%	43
Georgia	54%	46
South Carolina	53%	47
Arizona	52%	48
Utah	44%	49
Wyoming	33%	50

# State Delegation Scores and Rankings

State Delegation Rankings for Children		
State	State Delegation Average	Rank
Hawaii	100%	1
Connecticut	97%	2
North Dakota	97%	2
Maine	95%	4
Massachusetts	93%	5
Montana	93%	5
South Dakota	93%	5
Vermont	93%	5
Oregon	91%	9
New York	90%	10
Arkansas	90%	10
Rhode Island	90%	10
West Virginia	90%	10
Maryland	88%	14
Pennsylvania	88%	14
Washington	86%	16
Mississippi	84%	17
New Jersey	83%	18
Minnesota	82%	19
Michigan	82%	20
Illinois	81%	21
Iowa	80%	22
Wisconsin	79%	23
California	79%	23
Kansas	78%	25
Nevada	78%	25
New Hampshire	78%	25
North Carolina	77%	28
Louisiana	77%	28
Alaska	77%	28
Missouri	75%	31
New Mexico	74%	32
Kentucky	74%	32
Colorado	72%	34
Ohio	72%	34
Indiana	72%	34
Virginia	72%	34

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# State Delegation Scores and Rankings

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## State Delegation Rankings for Children (continued)

State	State Delegation Average	Rank
Delaware	70%	38
Florida	69%	39
Alabama	67%	40
Tennessee	65%	41
Texas	61%	42
Idaho	60%	43
Nebraska	60%	43
Oklahoma	60%	43
Georgia	54%	46
South Carolina	53%	47
Arizona	52%	48
Utah	44%	49
Wyoming	33%	50

## Senators Up for Re-election in 2010

Twenty-eight Senators will be up for reelection in 2010. The chart below displays the voting records of these Senators for the past four years, including their average score. Three Senators received an average score of 100 percent over the past four years, whereas 14 Senators failed to meet an average passing grade.

Name of Senator	2008 (%)	2007 (%)	2006 (%)	2005 (%)	Average Score
Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-HI)	100	100	100	100	100
Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-VT)	100	100	100	100	100
Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA)	100	100	100	100	100
Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-CA)	100	90	100	100	97.5
Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR)	100	90	100	100	97.5
Sen. Evan Bayh (D-IN)	90	100	100	100	97.5
Sen. Russ Feingold (D-WI)	90	100	100	100	97.5
Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD)	90	100	100	89	94.75
Sen. Harry Reid (D-NV)	100	100	100	78	94.5
Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-NY)	100	90	80	100	92.5
Sen. Byron Dorgan (D-ND)	100	90	100	78	92
Sen. Christopher Dodd (D-CT)	100	60	100	100	90
Sen. Blanche Lincoln (D-AK)	90	80	70	67	76.75
Sen. Arlen Specter (R-PA)	90	70	30	22	53
Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-IO)	80	60	10	11	40.25
Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AL)	70	60	10	11	37.75
Sen. John Thune (R-SD)	80	40	10	0	32.5
Sen. Johnny Isakson (R-GA)	80	40	0	0	30
Sen. Bob Bennet (R-UT)	60	50	10	0	30
Sen. Richard Burr (R-NC)	70	30	10	0	27.5
Sen. Richard Shelby (R-AL)	70	40	0	0	27.5
Sen. Jim Bunning (R-KY)	70	30	0	0	25
Sen. Mike Crapo (R-ID)	70	30	0	0	25
Sen. Judd Gregg (R-NH)	50	30	0	11	22.75
Sen. David Vitter (R-LA)	70	20	0	0	22.5
Sen. John McCain (R-AZ)	40	10	10	22	20.5
Sen. Tom Coburn (R-OK)	20	20	10	0	12.5
Sen. Jim DeMint (R-SC)	0	20	0	0	5

# How Your Members' Votes Affect Children

## Key Senate 2008 Children's Votes

### ■ Tax Credits to Stimulate the Economy

H.R. 5140, Sen. Roll Call Vote 10; Passed 81–16

This bill provided tax credits to low- and middle-income families who were expected to spend the money quickly to meet their basic needs and stimulate the economy.

### ■ Extended Unemployment Benefits

H.R. 6867, Sen. Roll Call Vote 214; Motion agreed to 89–6

This bill extended unemployment benefits to help families better meet their needs while seeking work.

### ■ 2009 Budget Resolution

S. Con. Res. 70, Conference Report, Sen. Roll Call Vote 142; Adopted 48–45

The Budget Resolution included important funding priorities for children and rejected proposed cuts by President Bush that would have hurt families and children.

### ■ Health Coverage for Pregnant Women

Amendment to the FY 2009 Budget Resolution, S. Con. Res. 70, Sen. Roll Call Vote 80; Adopted 70–27

This amendment increased the likelihood that low-income pregnant women would have health coverage under SCHIP, which is critical to providing children a healthy start in life.

### ■ Health and Energy Assistance Funding

Amendment to the FY 2009 Budget Resolution, S. Con. Res. 70, Sen. Roll Call Vote 53; Adopted 95–4

This amendment increased the likelihood that low-income children and families could benefit from help with heating, cooling and related energy costs and also increased funding for medical research.

### ■ Moratorium on Harmful Medicaid Regulations

Supplemental Appropriations – Motion to Concur, H.R. 2642, Sen. Roll Call Vote 137; Agreed to 75–22

This amendment placed a moratorium on harmful Medicaid regulations proposed by the Bush Administration that would have seriously jeopardized access to health and mental health care for various groups of vulnerable children and adults.

### ■ Support for Mental Health Benefits/Tax Provisions Extensions

H.R. 6049, Sen. Roll Call Vote 204; Agreed to 84–11

This amendment made it possible for the Senate to vote to eliminate discrimination in the coverage of mental health treatment for children and adults.

### ■ Increases in Funding for Food Stamps and Other Nutrition Programs

H.R. 6124, Sen. Roll Call Vote 144; Passed 77–15

This bill helped children and families by increasing investments in food stamps and other nutrition programs to help offset rising food costs.

### ■ Tighter Safety Standards

H.R. 4040, Conference Report, Sen. Roll Call Vote 193; Passed 89–3

This bill protected children from unsafe toys by strengthening safety regulations and monitoring mechanisms.

### ■ Help for Youth to Pay for College

H.R. 4137, Conference Report, Sen. Roll Call Vote 194; Passed 83–8

This bill made it easier for more young people, including youths with special needs, to get the financial support necessary to afford a college education.



## Key House of Representatives 2008 Children's Votes

### ■ 2009 Budget Resolution

S. Con. Res. 70, Conference Report, House Roll Call Vote 382; Adopted 214–210

The Budget Resolution included important funding priorities for children and rejected proposed cuts by President Bush that would have hurt families and children.

### ■ Extended Unemployment Benefits

H.R. 6867, House Roll Call Vote 683; Passed 368–28

This bill extended unemployment benefits to help families better meet their needs while seeking work.

### ■ Increases in Funding for Food Stamps and Other Nutrition Programs

H.R. 6124, House Roll Call Vote 353; Passed 306–110

This bill helped children and families by increasing investments in food stamps and other nutrition programs to help offset rising food costs.

### ■ Moratorium on Harmful Medicaid Regulations

H.R. 5613, House Roll Call Vote 209; Passed 349–62

This amendment placed a moratorium on harmful Medicaid regulations proposed by the Bush Administration that would have seriously jeopardized access to health and mental health care for various groups of vulnerable children and adults.

### ■ Parity for Mental Health Benefits

H.R. 6983, House Roll Call Vote 625; Passed 376–47

This bill eliminated discrimination in the coverage of mental health treatment for children and adults.

### ■ Equal Treatment for Mental Health Patients

H.R. 1424, House Roll Call Vote 101; Passed 268–148

This bill expanded health insurance coverage of mental health conditions and ended discrimination in the coverage of mental health treatment for children and adults.

### ■ Paid Leave for Parents

H.R. 5781, House Roll Call Vote 428; Passed 278–146

This bill provides four weeks of paid parental leave for federal employees to allow them to stay at home with a newborn child or newly adopted children without having to worry about losing pay or losing their job.

### ■ Tighter Safety Standards

H.R. 4040, Conference Report, House Roll Call Vote 543; Passed 424–1

This bill was a vote to protect children from unsafe toys by strengthening safety regulations and monitoring mechanisms.

### ■ Help for Youth to Pay for College

H.R. 4137, Conference Report, House Roll Call Vote 544; Passed 380–49

This bill made it easier for more young people, including youths with special needs, to get the financial support necessary to afford a college education.

### ■ Protection for Youths in Residential Programs

H.R. 6358, House Roll Call Vote 459; Passed 318–103

This bill protects youths in private residential treatment programs from abuse and neglect by requiring the Department of Health and Human Services to enforce health and safety standards for children in such programs and requiring staff to notify parents when their children's treatment changes or abuses occur.

# What You Can Do to Help Children

With the new 111<sup>th</sup> Congress and a new President, we have the opportunity, as a nation, to step forward to ensure a level playing field for *every* child. We are at a transformative moment with budget and policy proposals that will re-order our country's priorities to address daunting challenges that far too many children and their families face. For the first time in years, we have a federal budget that invests significantly in low-income children and families through refundable tax credits, health care reform and expanded resources for early childhood development and education.

The 111<sup>th</sup> Congress began by passing two very significant pieces of legislation, where Members' votes demonstrated their commitment to invest in children and prepare our nation for a productive future. These included votes for passage of:

- The *Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2009* (CHIPRA) to strengthen and extend the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) through September 30, 2013, and provide coverage for millions of additional uninsured children; and
- The *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* (Recovery Act), which included a number of critical provisions for low-income families and children: refundable tax credits; increased funding for education, early childhood development and child care programs; increased Medicaid investments; extended unemployment benefits; expanded food stamps; and COBRA subsidies for workers who lost jobs.

These two bills reaffirm the Children's Defense Fund Action Council's vision for children and provide the resources for many programs and reforms for which we have long fought. But while there is reason for great optimism, together we must build sustained public will to ensure national priorities that put children first and help translate commitments into just and effective services on the ground, ensuring good use of federal resources. We call on the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress to enact legislation that addresses the following priorities to improve the lives of low-income families and their children, keep them out of the pipeline to prison and on the path to success. Please visit [www.cdfactioncouncil.org](http://www.cdfactioncouncil.org) to contact your Members of Congress today.

## End Child Poverty

Every year that we keep children in poverty costs our nation half a trillion dollars in lost productivity. We must end poverty through investments in high quality education, livable wages, job training, income supplements, and work supports like child care and health care coverage.

- Congress must support permanent expansions of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) for families with three or more children; as well as make the Child Tax Credit fully refundable.

## Ensure Comprehensive Health and Mental Health Coverage for All Children and Pregnant Women

The United States is the wealthiest nation in the world, yet our children's health status is among the worst in the industrialized world.

- Congress must support health care reform that guarantees comprehensive, affordable *health and mental health coverage for all children and pregnant women* in America.

## Provide High Quality Early Childhood Development Programs for All

Quality child care and preschool programs are critical to ensure children enter school ready to learn and to lay the foundation for their later ability to complete higher levels of education. Congress must enact legislation to:

- Continue to invest in *Early Head Start and Head Start* to enroll all eligible young children. Explore options to make these full day programs and integrate them with other quality early childhood programs in communities.
- Increase investments in *quality child care to reach all children in families with incomes at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level.*

- *Execute the President's quality evidence-based home visiting initiative* to enhance healthy development, promote school readiness and prevent child abuse and neglect.
- *Develop state early childhood systems that address the full range of children's developmental needs* (early care and education; early intervention; social, emotional and physical development; economic and parenting supports for families).

### **Ensure Every Child Can Read at Grade Level by Fourth Grade and Guarantee Quality Education through High School Graduation**

Obtaining a high school diploma is the single most effective preventive strategy against adult poverty. We must ensure adequate resources for schools to provide high quality education to every child. Congress must enact legislation to:

- *Reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (No Child Left Behind)* with provisions that can close the achievement gap between poor and minority children and their peers; hold districts and schools accountable for student achievement and graduation rates; promote high quality teachers in all neighborhoods; provide appropriate assessments and services for children with special needs; and allow more diverse providers.
- Address the *high school dropout crisis* and take steps to improve low-performing high schools.
- Make necessary federal, state and local investments to ensure *every child can read by fourth grade and graduate from high school*.
- Bring to scale promising *out-of-school programs that engage and enrich children*.

### **Protect Children from Abuse and Neglect and Connect Them to Caring Permanent Families**

Almost 800,000 children each year are abused or neglected, yet 40 percent of them receive no services after the initial investigation. Children left in foster care with no permanent family connections have no one for long-term support. We must expand prevention and specialized treatment services for children and their parents, and increase accountability for results. Congress must enact legislation to:

- Extend to *children in foster care* and with relative guardians the same *education protections* afforded to homeless children in the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act.
- Support improvements in the *quality of the child welfare workforce* to enhance outcomes for children.
- Expand and redirect *federal investments in prevention, specialized treatment and services to keep children in permanent families, and enhance public agency accountability* for improved outcomes for vulnerable children at risk of placement or already in foster care.

### **Stop Criminalizing Children and Invest in Prevention and Intervention**

States spend about three times as much money per prisoner as per public school pupil. We must focus less on punishment and more on early intervention and prevention strategies, such as quality early childhood development and education. Congress must:

- Support legislation, like the *Youth PROMISE Act*, that invests in prevention and intervention programs as a means to address juvenile delinquency and gang crime.
- Reauthorize the *Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act* and strengthen protections for children and youths who come into contact with the juvenile and criminal justice system.
- Support legislation that would suspend, rather than terminate, *Medicaid benefits for incarcerated youths*.
- Support the *National Criminal Justice Commission Act of 2009*, legislation that would establish a commission to review the nation's adult and juvenile criminal justice systems and offer recommendations for reform.

**Step up and take action today send an email to your Members of Congress at [www.childrensdefense.org/action](http://www.childrensdefense.org/action).**

# How the CDF Action Council Compiles This Congressional Scorecard

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The 2008 Children's Defense Fund Action Council® Nonpartisan Congressional Scorecard scores ten Senate and ten House votes that directly affect the lives of children. The Senate and House votes in this year's Congressional Scorecard cover a range of issues, including the budget, health and mental health care, higher education, tax credits and extended unemployment benefits. Members not voting and votes cast as "present" are scored as votes against children. While we acknowledge that some missed votes are unavoidable due to Member or family illness, it is not possible for us to objectively determine the reason behind each missed vote. For example, as a result of the Presidential election in 2008, scores for some Members who devoted significant time to campaigning for the November election may be considerably lower than in past years. Also, Members like Senator Ted Kennedy, who were out for part of 2008 due to a serious illness, will have lower scores. However, we would like to acknowledge that for more than four decades, Senator Kennedy has been a faithful advocate for children, typically scoring 100 percent on the CDF Action Council's annual Scorecard.

Members who served only part of a term are scored only on votes cast while in office. It should also be noted that the Speaker of the House holds a unique position. Although entitled to participate in debate and vote, he or she traditionally votes only when the vote would be decisive and on matters of special importance such as constitutional amendments.

State delegation scores are calculated by adding each state's Senators' and Representatives' votes for the CDF Action Council position and dividing by the number of votes scored. Information on how a Representative or Senator voted on each selected bill comes from CQ.com, an automated Internet legislative database, and is based on the *Congressional Quarterly's* record of the votes. These votes are also checked against the House and Senate roll call votes to ensure they are consistent.

We hope this Nonpartisan Congressional Scorecard will serve as an important educational tool as you review the actions of your Members of Congress and make decisions about who you will elect to Congress in the future. Judge for yourself how well your Senators' and Representatives' votes and actions matched their rhetoric about protecting children. We encourage you to call, write and visit your Senators and Representatives in Washington, D.C., and in their district offices. Go to [www.cdfactioncouncil.org](http://www.cdfactioncouncil.org) and sign up for Email Updates under "Get Involved" to find out when Congress is making critical decisions about children and to let them know your views.

This annual Nonpartisan Congressional Scorecard is part of the CDF Action Council's public education, ongoing policy analysis and advocacy for children. It should not be taken as an endorsement of any candidate for public office.

Visit [www.cdfactioncouncil.org](http://www.cdfactioncouncil.org) for more information, including:

- 2008 scores on votes affecting children for every Member of Congress
- Marian Wright Edelman's Child Watch® column about the Scorecard
- Interactive state map
- Past CDF Action Council Scorecards
- How you can take action to help children
- State of America's Children® 2008 report
- Children in the States fact sheets

## Moments in America for All Children

Every second a public school student is suspended.\*  
Every 11 seconds a high school student drops out.\*  
Every 19 seconds a child is arrested.  
Every 20 seconds a public school student is corporally punished.\*  
Every 21 seconds a baby is born to an unmarried mother.  
Every 33 seconds a baby is born into poverty.  
Every 35 seconds a child is confirmed as abused or neglected.  
Every 39 seconds a baby is born without health insurance.  
Every minute a baby is born to a teen mother.  
Every 2 minutes a baby is born at low birthweight.  
Every 4 minutes a child is arrested for a drug offense.  
Every 7 minutes a child is arrested for a violent crime.  
Every 18 minutes a baby dies before his or her first birthday.  
Every 44 minutes a child or teen dies from an accident.  
Every 3 hours a child or teen is killed by a firearm.  
Every 5 hours a child or teen commits suicide.  
Every 6 hours a child is killed by abuse or neglect.  
Every 14 hours a woman dies from complications of childbirth or pregnancy.

\* Based on calculations per school day (180 days of seven hours each)

## Each Day in America for All Children

2 mothers die in childbirth.  
4 children are killed by abuse or neglect.  
5 children or teens commit suicide.  
8 children or teens are killed by a firearm.  
33 children or teens die from an accident.  
78 babies die before their first birthday.  
201 children are arrested for a violent crime.  
404 children are arrested for a drug crime.  
928 babies are born at low birthweight.  
1,154 babies are born to teen mothers.  
1,240 public school students are corporally punished.\*  
2,224 babies are born without health insurance.  
2,367 high school students drop out.\*  
2,479 children are confirmed as abused or neglected.  
2,583 babies are born into poverty.  
4,184 babies are born to unmarried mothers.  
4,520 children are arrested.  
18,493 public school students are suspended.

\* Based on calculations per school day (180 days of seven hours each)

## How America Ranks Among Industrialized Countries in Investing in and Protecting Children

- 1<sup>st</sup> in gross domestic product
- 1<sup>st</sup> in number of billionaires in the world
- 1<sup>st</sup> in health expenditures
- 1<sup>st</sup> in military technology
- 1<sup>st</sup> in defense expenditures
- 1<sup>st</sup> in military weapons exports
- 16<sup>th</sup> in maternal mortality rates
- 21<sup>st</sup> in 15-year-olds' science scores
- 22<sup>nd</sup> in low birthweight rates
- 23<sup>rd</sup> in neonatal mortality rates
- 25<sup>th</sup> in 15-year-olds' math scores
- 27<sup>th</sup> in infant mortality rates
- Last in relative child poverty
- Last in the gap between the rich and the poor
- Last in adolescent (ages 15 to 19) birth rates
- Last in protecting our children against gun violence
- Worst in the number of persons incarcerated

The United States and Somalia (which has no legally constituted government) are the only two United Nations members that have failed to ratify the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The United States is the only major industrialized country that does not guarantee prenatal care to pregnant women.

### **If we compare just Black child well-being to children in other nations:**

- 62 nations have lower infant mortality rates, including Barbados, Malaysia and Thailand.
- Over 100 nations have lower percentages of low birthweight births, including Algeria, Botswana and Panama.
- Black women in the United States are more likely to die from complications of pregnancy and childbirth than mothers in Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

