

Children's Defense Fund Child Poverty in America 2016: National Analysis



September 18, 2017

Poverty data released by the U.S. Census Bureau on September 12, 2017 reveal child poverty declined last year to more than 13.2 million poor children, approximately one million fewer than in 2015. The national child poverty rate declined from 19.7 percent in 2015 to 18.0 percent in 2016, a statistically significant decrease. Despite a decline in child poverty, children remain the poorest age group in the nation.

Child Poverty

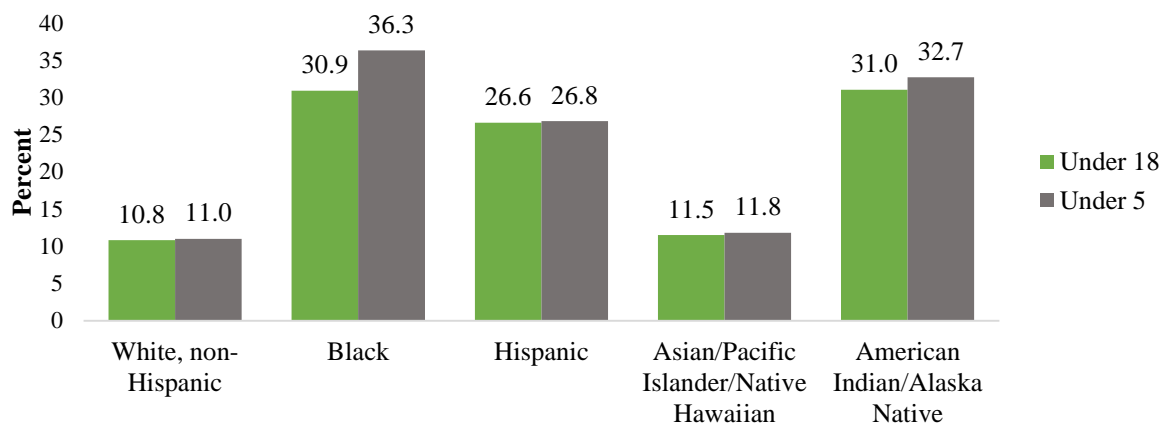
There were 40.6 million poor people in America in 2016, and one in three were children. Eighteen percent of children were poor in 2016 compared with 11.6 percent of people ages 18-64 and 9.3 percent of people ages 65 and older.

- There were **13,253,000** children living in poverty in 2016.
- **18.0 percent** of children lived in poverty in 2016, an 8.6 percent decrease from **19.7 percent** in 2015.
- Poverty is defined as an **annual income below \$24,563** for an average family of four, meaning less than **\$2,047** a month, **\$472** a week or **\$68** a day.

**Number and Percent of Children in Poverty
by Age and Race/Ethnicity*, 2016**

	White, non-Hispanic		Black		Hispanic		Asian/ Pacific Islander/ Native Hawaiian		American Indian/ Alaska Native	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Under 18	4,050,000	10.8	3,135,000	30.9	4,890,000	26.6	459,000	11.5	193,000	31.0
Under 5	1,064,000	11.0	1,002,000	36.3	1,371,000	26.8	133,000	11.8	53,000	32.7

Percent of Children in Poverty by Age and Race/Ethnicity, 2016



*Data for all racial groups exclude Hispanic ethnicity.

Extreme Child Poverty

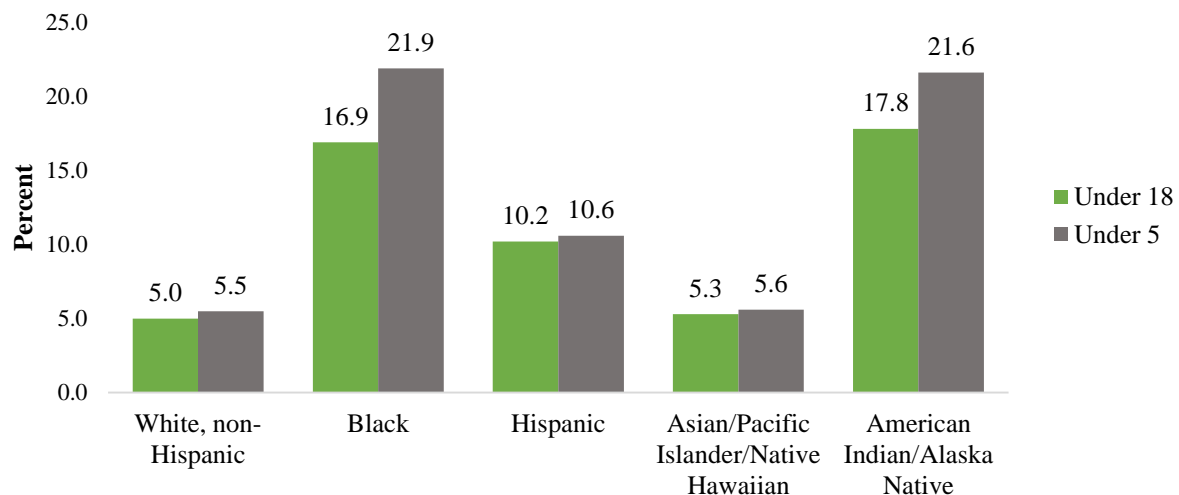
In 2016, more than 6.0 million children—one in 12—lived in extreme poverty, defined as an annual income of less than half the poverty level, or **\$12,282** for a family of four, which amounts to less than **\$1,024** a month, **\$237** a week, or **\$34** a day.

- The number of children living in extreme poverty: **6,027,000**
- The percent of children living in extreme poverty: **8.2 percent**, a 7.9 percent decrease from 8.9 percent in 2015.

**Number and Percent of Children in Extreme Poverty
by Age and Race/Ethnicity*, 2016**

	White, non-Hispanic		Black		Hispanic		Asian/ Pacific Islander/ Native Hawaiian		American Indian/ Alaska Native	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Under 18	1,860,000	5.0	1,720,000	16.9	1,881,000	10.2	212,000	5.3	111,000	17.8
Under 5	529,000	5.5	604,000	21.9	544,000	10.6	63,000	5.6	35,000	21.6

Percent of Children in Extreme Poverty by Age and Race/Ethnicity, 2016



*Data for all racial groups exclude Hispanic ethnicity.

Young Children

The youngest children have the highest poverty rates. In 2016, nearly one in five infants, toddlers and preschoolers were poor at the time of greatest brain development.

- The number of children under 5 living in poverty: **3,810,000**
 - Nearly one in five children under 5 were poor (**19.3 percent**), a 9.8 percent decrease from 21.4 percent in 2015.
- The number of children under 5 living in extreme poverty: **1,868,000**, or nearly half of all poor children under 5 (49.0 percent).
 - Nearly one in ten children under 5 were living in extreme poverty (**9.4 percent**)

Family Characteristics¹

Nearly 8.7 million poor children lived in single-parent families with the majority in single-mother families. Children in single-parent families were more likely to be poor; however, married-couple families with children were not immune to poverty.

- The percent of all poor children living in single-mother families: **59.5 percent**; in single-father families: **8.0 percent**; and in married-couple families: **32.5 percent**
- Poverty among the more than 23.6 million children in single-parent families: **37.2 percent**, down from 38.9 percent in 2015.
- Poverty among the approximately 49.5 million children in married-couple families: **8.4 percent**, down from 9.8 percent in 2015.

Work Status of Family Members

- More than two-thirds of poor children (**69.5 percent**) had at least one family member who worked, and nearly one-third (**30.9 percent**) had at least one family member who worked full-time year-round.
- The number of children in families with no working adults decreased from about 5 to 4.6 million.
- Poverty among children in families with at least one worker decreased from 14.5 to 13.1 percent.
- Poverty among children in families with at least one *full-time year-round* worker decreased from 7.8 to 6.8 percent.

Children of Color

Black and Hispanic children continue to suffer disproportionately from poverty with the youngest children most at risk of being poor.

- **Nearly one in three** American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) children and Black children and **more than one in four** Hispanic children were poor in 2016 compared with **one in nine** White children.
- **Approximately one in six** AI/AN children and Black children and **one in ten** Hispanic children were living in extreme poverty compared with **one in 20** White children.
- **More than one in three** Black children under age 5 were poor; **more than one in five** were extremely poor.
- While Black children had the highest poverty rate, the largest number of poor children were Hispanic children (**4,890,000**) followed by White children (**4,050,000**) and Black children (**3,135,000**).

Supplemental Poverty Measure

The Census Bureau also reported data from the Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM), which expands on the Official Poverty Measure by analyzing the impact of various government and other programs on family resources. The SPM data suggest poverty would be far more widespread if not for key federal programs that helped lift millions of children and families out of poverty in 2016.

Listed below are the government programs included in the SPM and the number of children lifted out of poverty because of each program:

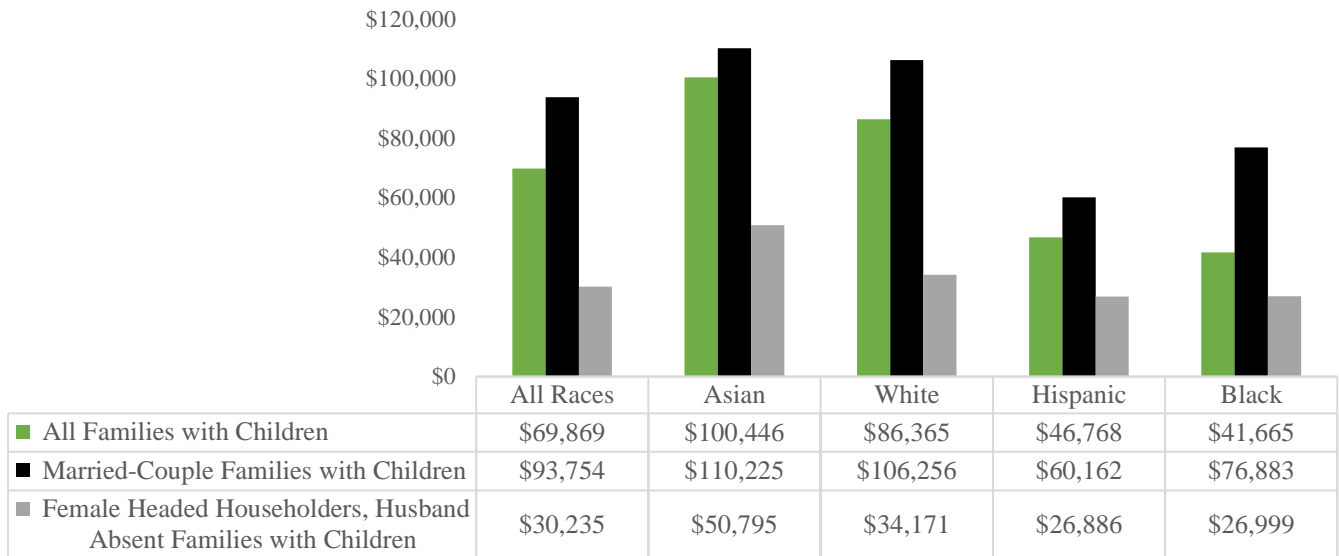
- Refundable tax credits: 4,398,000
- SNAP: 1,522,000
- Social Security: 1,482,000
- Housing subsidies: 1,048,000
- School lunch: 783,000
- SSI: 494,000
- Child support received: 419,000
- TANF/general assistance: 307,000
- Unemployment insurance: 209,000
- WIC: 133,000
- Workers' compensation: 58,000
- Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program: 38,000

¹ Percentages of all poor children living in single-mother families, married couple families, and single-father families are calculated using the number of related children under 18 (12.8 million) rather than the number of all poor children (13.3 million).

Income Inequality Continues

- The median incomes of Black families with children (\$41,665) was less than half the median income of White families with children (\$86,365) in 2016.
- Female householders have lower median incomes than any other family type. The median income for female-headed households is less than a third of the median income of married-couple families.
- The median income of Hispanic female householders and Hispanic married-couple families are the lowest compared with female householders and married-couple families in other racial groups.

Median Income of Families with Children, by Family Type, 2016



Notes and Citations

All data are from the Annual Social and Economic Supplement of the U.S. Census Current Population Survey and reflect poverty for the calendar year 2016.

CHILD POVERTY:

Poor Children (under age 18 and under age 5), number and percent: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, 2017 Annual Social and Economic Supplement (Below 100 percent of poverty, all races).

Children in Extreme Poverty (under age 18 and under age 5), number and percent: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, 2017 Annual Social and Economic Supplement (Below 50 percent of poverty, all races)

Poverty Thresholds (dollar amounts used to determine poverty status): U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, “Poverty Thresholds for 2016 by Size of Family and Number of Related Children Under 18 Years.” We use the weighted average for a family of four.

FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS:

Poor Children by Family Structure: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, 2017 Annual Social and Economic Supplement, Table POV03 (Below 100 percent of poverty, all races). Calculations by Children’s Defense Fund.

WORK STATUS:

Poor Children by Family Work Status: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, 2017 Annual Social and Economic Supplement, Table POV13 (Below 100 percent of poverty, all races). Calculations by Children’s Defense Fund.

CHILD POVERTY BY RACE AND ETHNICITY:

Poor Children (under age 18 and under age 5), number and percent: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, 2017 Annual Social and Economic Supplement (Below 100 percent of poverty; White alone, not Hispanic; Black alone; Asian alone; Hispanic of any race).

Children in Extreme Poverty (under age 18 and under age 5), number and percent: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, 2017 Annual Social and Economic Supplement (Below 50 percent of poverty; White alone, not Hispanic; Black alone; Asian alone; Hispanic of any race).

INCOME INEQUALITY:

Median Incomes of Families with Children: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, 2017 Annual Social and Economic Supplement, Table FINC-03 (Presence of Related Children Under 18 Years Old-All Families by Total Money Income, Type of Family, Work Experience, Race and Hispanic Origin of Reference Person).

For further information on poverty, visit the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, 2017 Annual Social and Economic Supplement.
