

Children's Defense Fund

Child Poverty in America 2015: National Analysis



September 13, 2016

Poverty data released by the U.S. Census Bureau on September 13, 2016 reveal child poverty declined last year to 14.5 million poor children, one million fewer than in 2014, but still higher than before the recession began in 2007. The national child poverty rate declined from 21.1 percent in 2014 to 19.7 percent in 2015, a statistically significant decrease. Child poverty rates declined for White, Black, Hispanic and Asian children. Children of color are disproportionately poor and comprise nearly 70 percent of poor children in America. Children remain the poorest age group in the nation, and the 1 in 5 poor children continue to have the odds stacked against their success.

Child Poverty

There were **43.1 million** poor people in America in 2015, and one in three were children. Nearly **20 percent** of children were poor in 2015, compared to 12.4 percent of people ages 18-64 and 8.8 percent of people ages 65 and older.

- The number of children living in poverty in 2015: **14,509,000**.
- The percent of children living in poverty in 2015: **19.7 percent**, a 6.6 percent decrease from **21.1 percent** in 2014.
- Poverty is defined as an **annual income below \$24,257** for an average family of four, meaning less than **\$2,021** a month, **\$466** a week, or **\$66.46** a day.

Extreme Child Poverty

In 2015, **more than 6.5 million** children – one in 11 – lived in extreme poverty, defined as an annual income of less than half the poverty level, or **\$12,129** for a family of four, which amounts to less than **\$1,011** a month, **\$233** a week, or **\$33** a day.

- The number of children living in extreme poverty: **6,537,000**.
- The percent of children living in extreme poverty: **8.9 percent**, a 4.3 percent decrease from **9.3 percent** in 2014.

Young Children

The youngest children have the highest poverty rates. In 2015, more than 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: **4,215,000**.
 - More than one in five children under 5 were poor (**21.4 percent**), a 10.1 percent decrease from **23.8 percent** in 2014.
- The number of children under 5 living in extreme poverty: **2,056,000**, or nearly half of all poor children under 5 (**48.8 percent**).
 - One in ten children under 5 were living in extreme poverty (**10.4 percent**).

Family Characteristics¹

Approximately **9.2 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.

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 (14 million) rather than the number of all poor children (14.5 million).

- The percent of all poor children living in single-mother families: **56.2 percent**; in single-father families: **9.6 percent**; and in married-couple families: **34.2 percent**
- Poverty among the more than 23.6 million children in single-parent families: **38.9 percent**, down from **42.3 percent** in 2014.
- Poverty among the 49 million children in married-couple families: **9.8 percent**, down from **10.6 percent** in 2014.

Work Status of Family Members

- More than two-thirds of poor children (**70.2 percent**) had at least one family member who worked, and nearly one-third (**31.7 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 **5.5 million to nearly 5 million**.
- Poverty among children in families with at least one worker decreased slightly, from **15.5 to 14.5 percent**.
- Poverty among children in families with at least one *full-time year-round* worker decreased from **8.7 to 7.8 percent**.

Children of Color

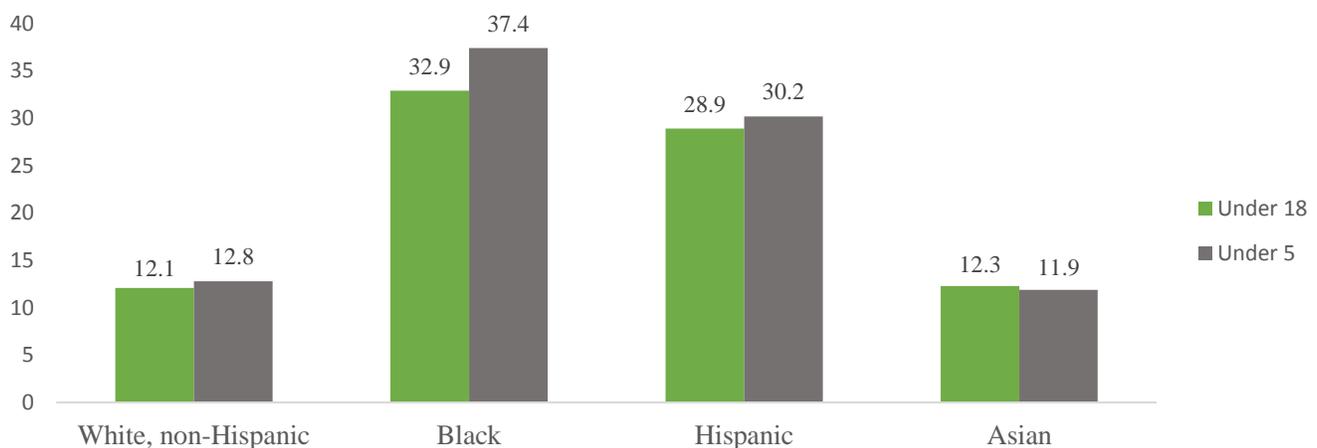
Black and Hispanic children continue to suffer disproportionately from poverty, with the youngest children most at risk of being poor.

- **One in three** Black children and **more than one in four** Hispanic children were poor in 2015, compared to **one in eight** White children.
- Nearly **one in six** Black children and **one in nine** Hispanic children were living in extreme poverty, compared to **one in 17** White children.
- **More than one in three** Black children under age 5 were poor; **one in five** were extremely poor.
- While Black children had the highest poverty rate, the largest number of poor children were Hispanic children (**5,269,000**) followed by White children (**4,563,000**) and Black children (**3,651,000**).

Child Poverty, by Age and Race, 2015

	White, non-Hispanic		Black		Hispanic		Asian	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Under 18	4,563,000	12.1	3,651,000	32.9	5,269,000	28.9	466,000	12.3
Under 5	1,245,000	12.8	1,116,000	37.4	1,537,000	30.2	125,000	11.9

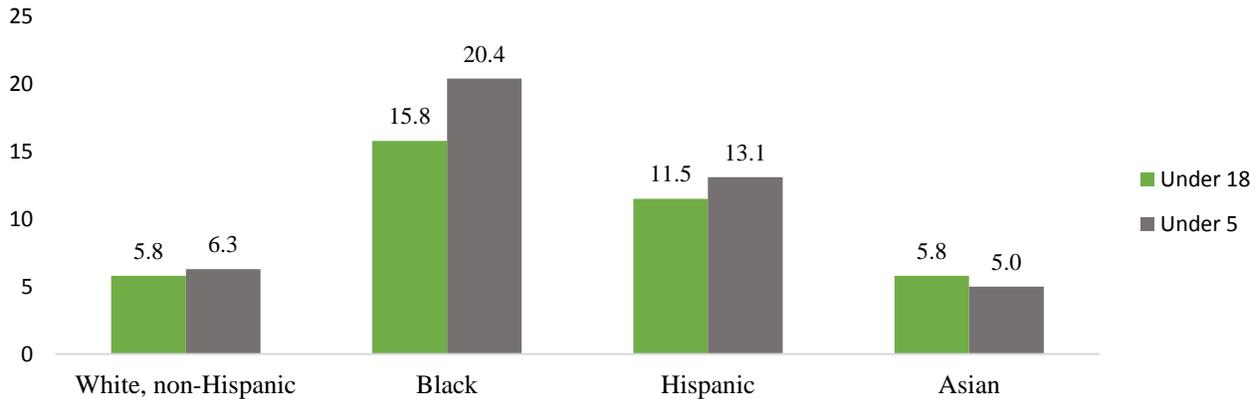
Percent of Children Living in Poverty, by Age and Race, 2015



Children Living in Extreme Poverty, by Age and Race, 2015

	White, non-Hispanic		Black		Hispanic		Asian	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Under 18	2,183,000	5.8	1,755,000	15.8	2,096,000	11.5	220,000	5.8
Under 5	620,000	6.3	610,000	20.4	667,000	13.1	53,000	5.0

Percent of Children Living in Extreme Poverty, by Age, and Race



Income Inequality Continues

- The median incomes of Black families with children (**\$39,371**) was less than half of the median income of White families with children (**\$82,969**) in 2015.
- 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. Nearly one in four of all children, one in two Black children and one in four Hispanic children live with their mother only.
- The median income of Hispanic female householders and Hispanic married-couple families are the lowest compared to other races.

Median Income of Families with Children, by Family Type, 2015



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 2015.

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, 2016 Annual Social and Economic Supplement, Table POV01 (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, 2016 Annual Social and Economic Supplement, Table POV01 (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 2015 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, 2016 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, 2016 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, 2016 Annual Social and Economic Supplement, Table POV01 (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, 2016 Annual Social and Economic Supplement, Table POV01 (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, 2016 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).

Living Arrangements of Children: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, America’s Families and Living Arrangements 2015, Table C3 (Living Arrangements of Children Under 18 Years¹ and Marital Status of Parents, by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin² and Selected Characteristics of the Child for All Children: 2015).

For further information on poverty, visit the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, 2016 Annual Social and Economic Supplement.