

Child Poverty in America 2019: National Analysis

Official poverty data released by the U.S. Census Bureau on September 15, 2020 show nearly 10.5 million children in America lived in poverty in 2019, about 1.4 million fewer than in 2018. The national child poverty rate declined from 16.2 percent in 2018 to 14.4 percent in 2019. Although 2019 data show a decline in poverty numbers, these estimates do not reflect the current realities and heightened disparities caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

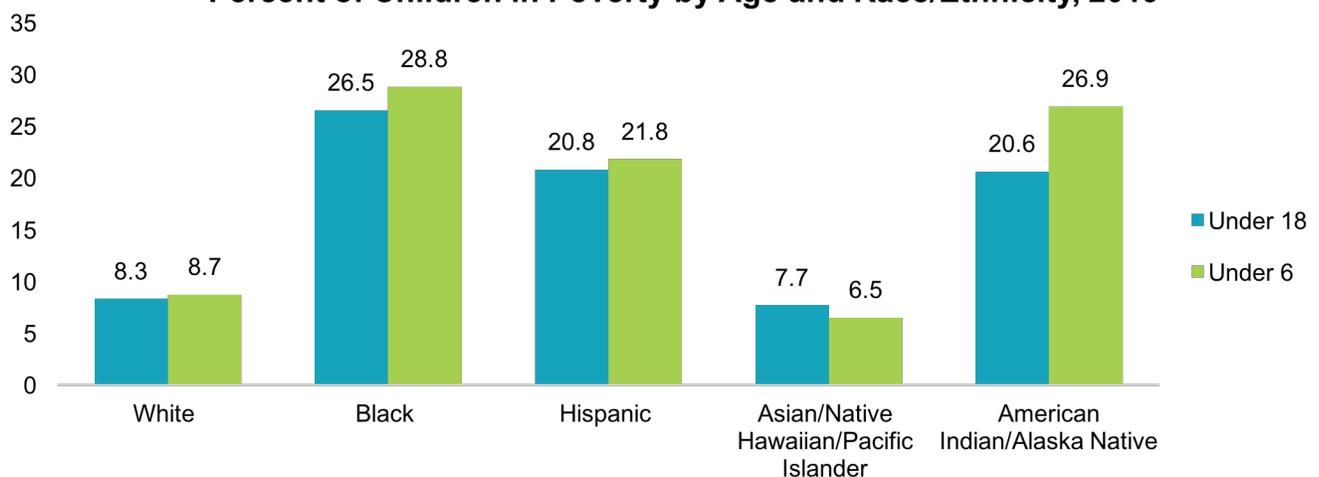
Child Poverty

- 34 million people in America were poor and nearly one-third of them (30.8 percent) were children.
- **10.5 million** children—about 1 in 7—lived in poverty.
- **Children were the poorest age group**, suffering higher poverty rates than adults and seniors. 14.4 percent of children were poor compared with 9.4 percent of people ages 18-64 and 8.9 percent of people 65 or older.
- Poverty is defined as an **annual income below \$25,926** for a family of four with two children—about **\$2,161** a month, **\$499** a week or **\$71** a day.

Child Poverty by Age and Race/Ethnicity, 2019

	White		Black		Hispanic		Asian/ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander		American Indian/ Alaska Native	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Under 18	3,029,608	8.3	2,667,773	26.5	3,888,278	20.8	301,093	7.7	126,543	20.6
Under 6	1,003,281	8.7	936,412	28.8	1,331,261	21.8	78,184	6.5	43,290	26.9

Percent of Children in Poverty by Age and Race/Ethnicity, 2019



Racial groups exclude children of Hispanic ethnicity. Hispanic children can be of any race.

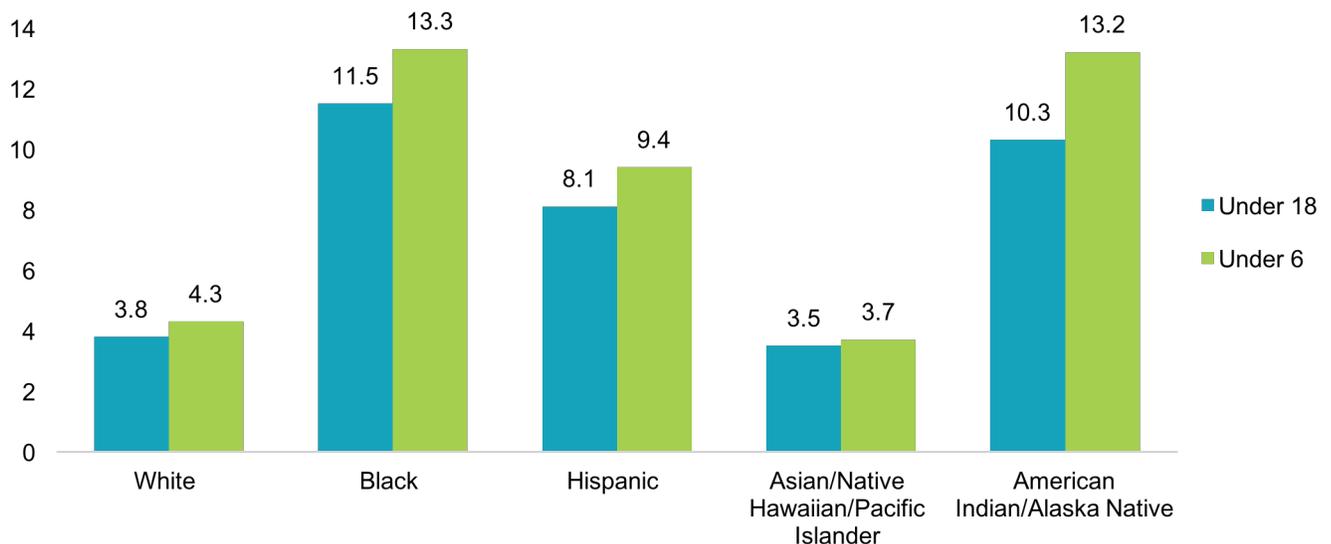
Extreme Child Poverty

- 4.5 million children—about 1 in 16—lived in extreme poverty, defined as an annual income of less than half the poverty level. This amounts to just **\$12,963** for a family of four with two children—**\$1,080** a month, **\$249** a week, or **\$36** a day.
- The extreme child poverty rate was 6.2 percent in 2019, a slight decrease from 6.9 percent in 2018.

Extreme Child Poverty by Age and Race/Ethnicity, 2019

	White		Black		Hispanic		Asian/ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander		American Indian/ Alaska Native	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Under 18	1,382,593	3.8	1,161,104	11.5	1,514,396	8.1	136,471	3.5	63,595	10.3
Under 6	493,237	4.3	432,370	13.3	571,327	9.4	44,451	3.7	21,289	13.2

Percent of Children in Extreme Poverty by Age and Race/Ethnicity, 2019



Racial groups exclude children of Hispanic ethnicity. Hispanic children can be of any race.

Young Children

- Nearly 1 in 6 infants, toddlers and preschoolers ages 0-5 (**15.4 percent**) were poor during their years of greatest brain development.
- **3.6 million** children under 6 lived in poverty; nearly half lived in extreme poverty (**1.6 million**).
- About 1 in 14 children under 6 (**7.2 percent**) were extremely poor.

Race & Ethnicity

- Black, Hispanic, and American Indian/Alaska Native children continue to suffer disproportionately from poverty, with the youngest children at greatest risk.
- **More than 1 in 4** Black children and **more than 1 in 5** Hispanic and American Indian/Alaska Native children were poor compared with **1 in 12** white children.
- **More than 1 in 9** Black children, **1 in 10** American Indian/Alaska Native children, and nearly **1 in 12** Hispanic children lived in extreme poverty compared with **1 in 25** white children. Black and American Indian/Alaska Native children were three times more likely to live in extreme poverty than white children.

- **More than 1 in 4** Black and American Indian/Alaska Native children under 6 were poor; **nearly 1 in 7** were extremely poor.
- While Black children had the highest poverty rates, Hispanic children accounted for the largest number of poor children (**3.9 million**) followed by white children (**3 million**) and Black children (**2.7 million**).

Family Characteristics¹

- Nearly 7 million poor children lived in single-parent families with the majority in female-headed households.
 - **59.9 percent** of all poor children lived in female-headed families
 - **8.4 percent** lived in male-headed families
 - **31.6 percent** lived in married-couple families
- Among the 22 million children in single-parent families, **31.7 percent** lived in poverty—down from 34.1 percent in 2018.
- Among the 50 million children in married-couple families, **6.4 percent** lived in poverty.

Employment Status of Family Members²

- More than two-thirds of poor children (**70.1 percent**) had at least one family member who worked and more than one-third (**33.7 percent**) had at least one family member who worked full-time year-round.
- Between 2018 and 2019, the number of children in families with no working adults decreased slightly from 4.2 million to 3.8 million.
- Poverty among children in working families decreased from 11.8 percent to 10.5 percent.
- Poverty among children living with at least one more full-time year-round worker decreased from 6.9 percent to 5.9 percent.

Supplemental Poverty Measure

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

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: 4,015,000 | • SSI: 536,000 |
| • SNAP: 994,000 | • TANF/General Assistance: 160,000 |
| • Social Security: 1,436,000 | • WIC: 127,000 |
| • Housing Subsidies: 763,000 | • Unemployment Insurance: 133,000 |
| • School Lunch: 661,000 | • LIHEAP: 30,000 |
| • Child Support Received: 365,000 | • Workers' Compensation: 18,000 |

¹ Percentages of poor children living in female-headed households, married couple households, and male-headed households are calculated using the number of poor children related to the head of household (10.2 million) rather than the total number of poor children (10.5 million).

² Percentages of poor children in working families are calculated using the number of poor children in related families (10.2 million) rather than the total number of poor children (10.5 million).

Citations:

All data are from the 2020 Annual Social and Economic Supplement of the U.S. Census Current Population Survey and reflect poverty during the 2019 calendar year.

Poverty and Extreme Poverty by Age: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey. 2020. “2019 Annual Social and Economic Supplement,” Table POV-01 (Below 100 percent and 50 percent of poverty, all races). <https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/data/tables.html>.

Poverty Thresholds (dollar amounts used to determine poverty status): U.S. Census Bureau. 2020. “Poverty Thresholds for 2019 by Size of Family and Number of Related Children Under 18 Years.” <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/historical-poverty-thresholds.html>.

Poor Children by Family Structure: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey. 2020. “2019 Annual Social and Economic Supplement,” Tables POV-03 and POV-07 (Below 100 percent of poverty, all races). Calculations by Children’s Defense Fund. <https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/data/tables.html>.

Poor Children by Family Work Status: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey. 2020. “2019 Annual Social and Economic Supplement,” Table POV13 (Below 100 percent of poverty, all races). Calculations by Children’s Defense Fund. <https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/data/tables.html>.

Poverty and Extreme Poverty by Race/Ethnicity: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey. 2020. “2019 Annual Social and Economic Supplement,” Table POV-01 (Below 100 percent and 50 percent of poverty; White alone, not Hispanic and Hispanic of any race). <https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/data/tables.html>. Non-Hispanic estimates for Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Asian/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander children were generated using the Census Microdata Analysis Tool (MDAT). <https://data.census.gov/mdat/#/>. Calculations by Children’s Defense Fund.