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

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

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

- **8.3** White Under 18
- **26.5** Black Under 18
- **20.8** Hispanic Under 18
- **7.7** Asian/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Under 18
- **20.6** American Indian/Alaska Native Under 18
- **8.7** White Under 6
- **28.8** Black Under 6
- **21.8** Hispanic Under 6
- **6.5** Asian/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Under 6
- **26.9** American Indian/Alaska Native Under 6

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 Characteristics
• 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 Members
• 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
- SNAP: 994,000
- Social Security: 1,436,000
- Housing Subsidies: 763,000
- School Lunch: 661,000
- Child Support Received: 365,000
- SSI: 536,000
- TANF/General Assistance: 160,000
- WIC: 127,000
- Unemployment Insurance: 133,000
- LIHEAP: 30,000
- 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.


