



# Child Poverty in America 2017: National Analysis

September 12, 2018

Poverty data released by the U.S. Census Bureau on September 12, 2018 show roughly 12.8 million America children lived in poverty in 2017, about 450,000 fewer than in 2016. The national child poverty rate declined from 18.0 percent in 2016 to 17.5 percent in 2017, though the decrease was not statistically significant. Child poverty rates declined for Black and Hispanic children, remained flat for White and American Indian/Alaska Native children and increased for Asian/Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander children. Overall, children remain the poorest age group in the nation.

## Child Poverty

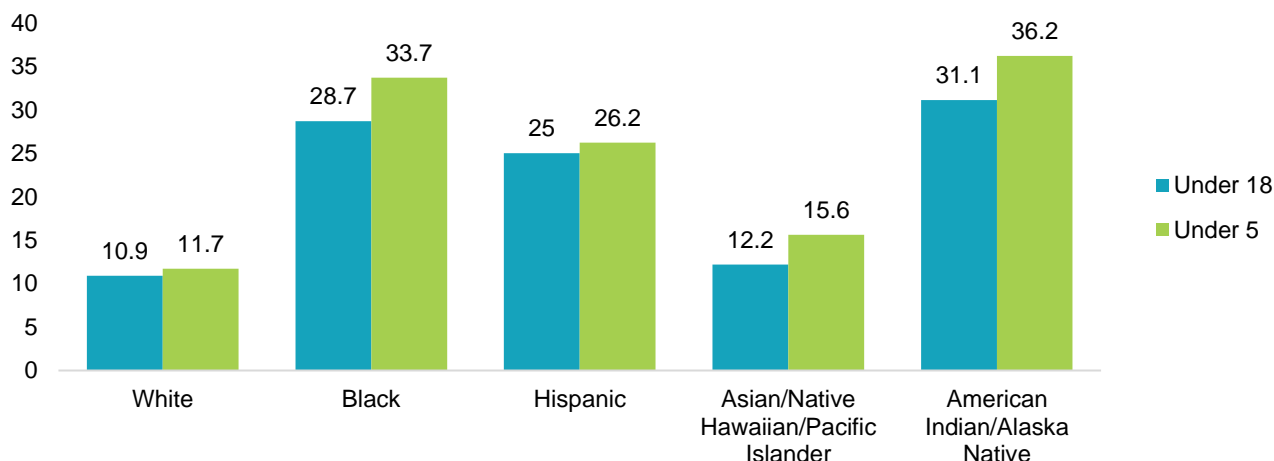
In total, 39.7 million poor people in America were poor in 2017 and a third of them were children. Nearly 1 in 5 children—17.5 percent—were poor in 2017, compared with 11.2 percent of people ages 18-64 and 9.2 percent of people ages 65 and older.

- **12,808,000** children lived in poverty in 2017.
- The proportion of children living in poverty was **17.5 percent** in 2017, a decrease from **18.0** percent in 2016.
- Poverty is defined as an **annual income below \$25,283** for a family of four, which divides out to about **\$2,107** a month, **\$486** a week or **\$69** a day.

**Child Poverty, by Age and Race/Ethnicity\*, 2017**

	White		Black		Hispanic		Asian/ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander		American Indian/ Alaska Native	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Under 18	4,026,000	10.9	2,889,000	28.7	4,639,000	25.0	500,000	12.2	195,000	31.1
Under 5	1,130,000	11.7	928,000	33.7	1,346,000	26.2	171,000	15.6	63,000	36.2

**Percent of Children in Poverty, by Age and Race/Ethnicity\*, 2017**



\*All racial groups exclude Hispanic ethnicity.

## Extreme Child Poverty

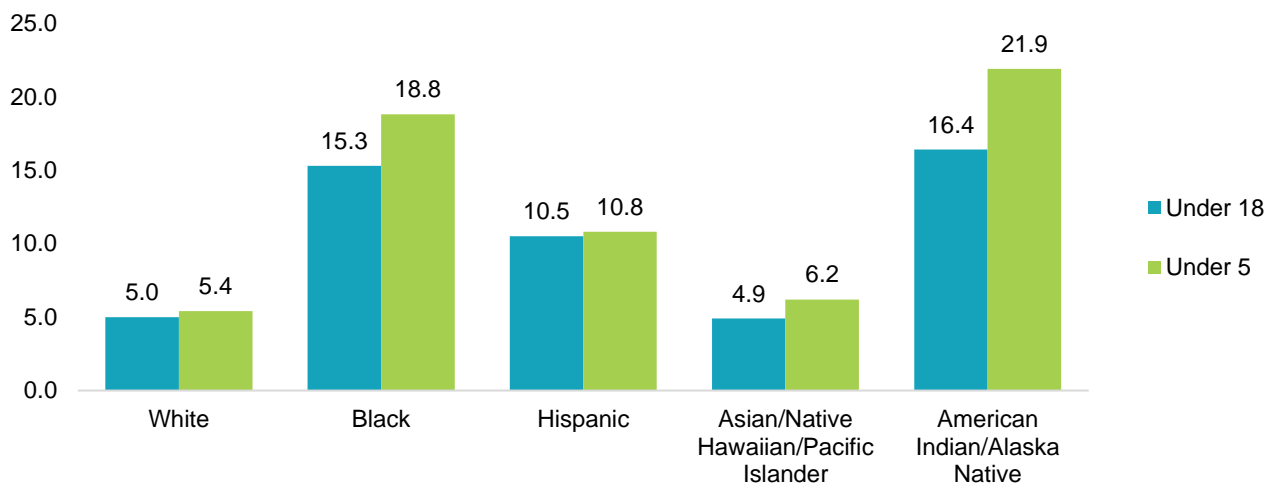
In 2017, nearly 5.9 million children—about 1 in 12—lived in extreme poverty, defined as an annual income of less than half the poverty level, or **\$12,642** for a family of four, which amounts to about **\$1,053** a month, **\$243** a week, or **\$35** a day.

- The number of children living in extreme poverty: **5,864,000**
- The percentage of children living in extreme poverty: **8.0 percent**, a slight decrease from 8.2 percent in 2016.

**Children Living in Extreme Poverty, by Age and Race/Ethnicity\*, 2017**

	White		Black		Hispanic		Asian/ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander		American Indian/ Alaska Native	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Under 18	1,869,000	5.0	1,537,000	15.3	1,945,000	10.5	201,000	4.9	103,000	16.4
Under 5	526,000	5.4	518,000	18.8	557,000	10.8	68,000	6.2	38,000	21.9

**Children Living in Extreme Poverty, by Age and Race/Ethnicity\*, 2017**



\*All racial groups exclude Hispanic ethnicity.

## Young Children

Our youngest children have the highest poverty rates. In 2017, nearly 1 in 5 infants, toddlers and preschoolers between the ages of 0 and 5 were poor at the time of greatest brain development.

- The number of children under 5 living in poverty: **3,865,000**
  - Nearly 1 in 5 children under 5 were poor (**19.6 percent**), an increase from **19.3 percent** in 2016.
- The number of children under 5 living in extreme poverty: **1,790,000**
  - Nearly half (46.3 percent) of all poor children under 5 lived in extreme poverty
  - Overall, nearly 1 in 10 children under 5 were living in extreme poverty (**9.1 percent**)

## Family Characteristics<sup>1</sup>

Nearly 8.3 million poor children lived in single-parent families in 2017, with the majority in single-mother families. While children in single-parent families were more likely to be poor, married-couple families with children were not immune to poverty.

- **58.2 percent** of all poor children lived in single-mother families
  - **8.3 percent** lived in single-father families
  - **33.5 percent** lived in married-couple families
- The poverty rate among the approximately 23.2 million children in single-parent families was **35.8 percent**, down from 37.2 percent in 2016.
- The poverty rate among the more than 49.4 million children in married-couple families was **8.4 percent**, the same as in 2016.

## Work Status of Family Members

- More than two-thirds of poor children (**70.1 percent**) had at least one family member who worked in 2017, and more than one-third (**34.0 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 more than 4.6 million to 4.5 million.
- Poverty among children in families with at least one worker decreased slightly, from 13.1 to 12.8 percent.
- Poverty among children in families with at least one full-time year-round worker increased from 6.8 to 7.3 percent.

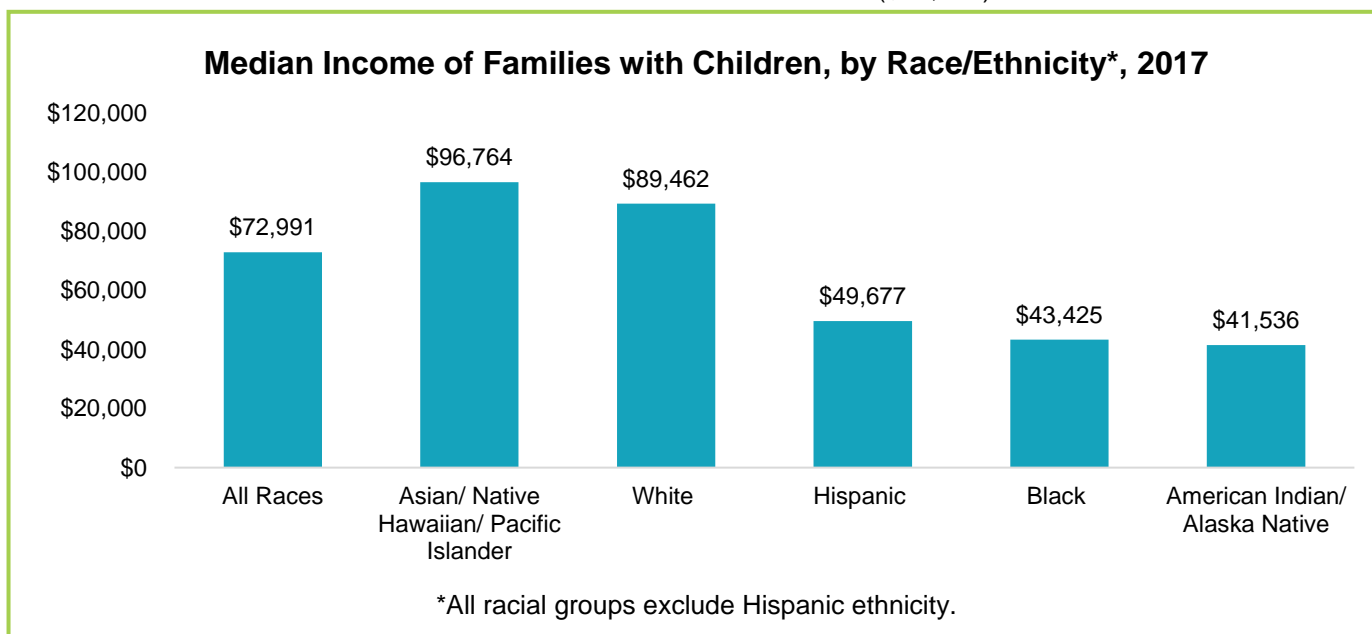
## Children of Color

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

- **Nearly 1 in 3** American Indian/Alaska Native children and **more than 1 in 4** Black and Hispanic children were poor in 2017, compared with **1 in 9** White children.
- **Nearly 1 in 6** American Indian/Alaska Native children, **more than 1 in 7** Black children and **1 in 10** Hispanic children were living in extreme poverty, compared with **1 in 20** White children. The extreme child poverty rates for American Indian/Alaska Native and Black children were more than 3 times that for White children.
- **More than 1 in 3** Black children under 5 were poor and **nearly 1 in 5** were extremely poor.
- While Black children had the highest poverty rate, the Hispanic children accounted for the largest number of poor children (**4,639,000**) followed by White children (**4,026,000**) and Black children (**2,889,000**).

## Income Inequality Continues

- The median incomes of Black (\$43,425) and American Indian/Alaska Native families with children (\$41,536) were less than half the median income of White families with children (\$89,462) in 2017.



<sup>1</sup> 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 (12.5 million) rather than the number of all poor children (12.8 million).

## 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 show poverty would be far more widespread if not for key federal programs that helped lift millions of children and families out of poverty in 2017.

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: 4,496,000
- SNAP: 1,473,000
- Social Security: 1,442,000
- Housing Subsidies: 897,000
- School Lunch: 722,000
- Child Support Received: 522,000
- SSI: 472,000
- TANF/General Assistance: 296,000
- WIC: 156,000
- Unemployment Insurance: 151,000
- LIHEAP: 47,000
- Workers' Compensation: 29,000

## 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 2017.

### CHILD POVERTY:

**Poor Children (under 18 and under 5), number and percent:** U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, 2018 Annual Social and Economic Supplement (Below 100 percent of poverty, all races).

**Children in Extreme Poverty (under 18 and under 5), number and percent:** U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, 2018 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 2017 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, 2018 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, 2018 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 18 and under 5), number and percent:** U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey Table Creator, 2018 Annual Social and Economic Supplement (Below 100 percent of poverty; White alone, not Hispanic; Black alone, not Hispanic; Asian/Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander alone, not Hispanic; American Indian/Alaska Native alone, not Hispanic; Hispanic of any race). Calculations by Children's Defense Fund.

**Children in Extreme Poverty (under 18 and under 5), number and percent:** U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey Table, 2018 Annual Social and Economic Supplement (Below 50 percent of poverty; White alone, not Hispanic; Black alone, not Hispanic; Asian/Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander alone, not Hispanic; American Indian/Alaska Native alone, not Hispanic; Hispanic of any race).

### INCOME INEQUALITY:

**Median Incomes of Families with Children:** U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, 2018 Annual Social and Economic Supplement, Table Generated with CPS Table Creator. Calculations by Children's Defense Fund.

For further information on poverty, visit the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, 2018 Annual Social and Economic Supplement.