

Children's Defense Fund

Child Poverty in America 2014: National Analysis



September 16, 2015

Poverty data released by the U.S. Census Bureau on September 16, 2015 reveal that child poverty declined slightly in 2014, from 21.5 percent in 2013 to 21.1 percent in 2014. While child poverty rates declined for Hispanic, White and Asian children, Black children saw an increase and continue to have the highest child poverty rate. Despite some decreases child poverty among all children remains at shamefully high levels. One in five children – 15.5 million – were poor in 2014, and children remain the poorest age group in the country.

Child Poverty

There were 46.7 million poor people in America in 2014, and one in three were children. Twenty-one percent of children were poor in 2014, compared to 13.5 percent of people ages 18-64 and 10 percent of people ages 65 and older.

- There were **15,540,000** children living in poverty in 2014.
- The percent of children living in poverty was **21.1 percent** in 2014, a 1.9 percent decrease from 21.5 percent in 2013.
- Poverty is defined as an **annual income below \$24,230** for an average family of four, meaning less than \$2,019 a month, \$466 a week, or \$66 a day.

Extreme Child Poverty

In 2014, nearly 6.8 million children – nearly one in 11 – lived in extreme poverty, defined as an annual income of less than half the poverty level, or **\$12,115** for a family of four, which amounts to less than \$1,010 a month, \$233 a week, or \$33 a day.

- The number of children living in extreme poverty: **6,813,000**
- The percent of children living in extreme poverty: **9.3 percent**, a 6 percent decrease from 9.9 percent in 2013.

Young Children

The youngest children have the highest poverty rates. In 2014, nearly one in four infants, toddlers and preschoolers were poor, at the time of greatest brain development.

- The number of children under 5 living in poverty: **4,704,000**
 - Nearly one in four children under 5 were poor (**23.8 percent**), a 2.5 percent decrease from 24.4 percent in 2013.
- The number of children under 5 living in extreme poverty: **2,253,000**, or nearly half of all poor children under 5 (47.9 percent).
 - One in nine children under 5 were living in extreme poverty (**11.4 percent**)

Family Characteristics¹

Approximately 9.7 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.

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 (15.0 million) rather than the number of all poor children (15.5 million).

- The percent of all poor children living in single-mother families: **56.7 percent**; in single-father families: **8.4 percent**; and in married-couple families: **35 percent**
- Poverty among the 23 million children in single-parent families: **42.3 percent**, a 0.9 percent decrease from 42.7 percent in 2013.
- Poverty among the 49.3 million children in married-couple families: **10.6 percent**, a 5 percent increase from 10.1 percent in 2013.

Work Status of Family Members¹

- More than two-thirds of poor children (**69.2 percent**) had at least one family member who worked, and nearly one-third (**32.9 percent**) had at least one family member who worked full-time year-round.
- The number of children in families with no working adults decreased 3.5 percent, from 5.7 million to 5.5 million.
- Poverty among children in families with at least one worker increased slightly, from 15.4 to 15.5 percent.
- Poverty among children in families with at least one *full-time year-round* worker increased 4 percent, from 8.4 to 8.7 percent.

Children of Color

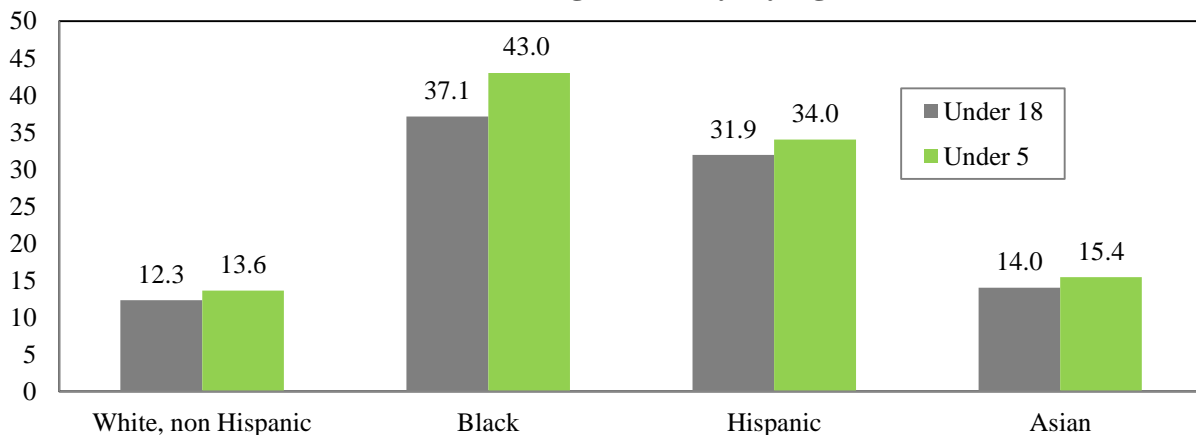
Black and Hispanic children continue to suffer disproportionately from poverty, with the youngest children most at risk of being poor. Black children were the only children not to experience a decrease in child poverty from 2013 to 2014. The child poverty rate for Black children increased by 10 percent between 2013 and 2014. Black children remain the group with the highest poverty rate.

- Nearly two in five Black children and three in 10 Hispanic children were poor in 2014, compared to one in 8 White children.
- Nearly one in five Black children and one in eight Hispanic children were living in extreme poverty, compared to one in 18 White children.
- More than two out of five Black children under age 5 were poor; nearly one in four were extremely poor.
- While Black children had the highest poverty rate, the largest number of poor children were Hispanic children (5,745,000) followed by White children (4,679,000) and Black children (4,090,000).

Child Poverty, by Age and Race, 2014

	White, non-Hispanic		Black		Hispanic		Asian	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Under 18	4,679,000	12.3	4,244,000	37.1	5,745,000	31.9	524,000	14.0
Under 5	1,335,000	13.6	1,282,000	43.0	1,729,000	34.0	164,000	15.4

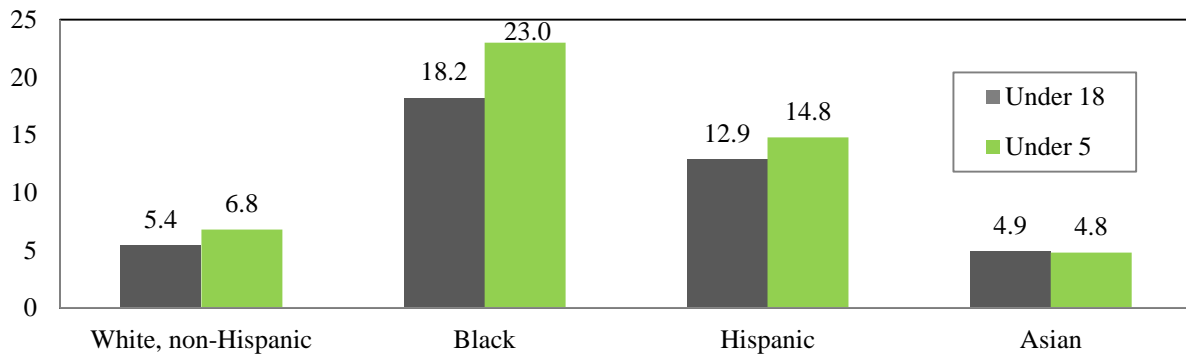
Percent of Children Living in Poverty, by Age and Race, 2014



Children Living in Extreme Poverty, by Age and Race, 2014

	White, non-Hispanic		Black		Hispanic		Asian	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Under 18	2,047,000	5.4	2,003,000	18.2	2,318,000	12.9	185,000	4.9
Under 5	665,000	6.8	684,000	23.0	753,000	14.8	51,000	4.8

Percentage of Children Living in Extreme Poverty, by Age and Race, 2014



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.

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, 2015 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, 2015 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 2014 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, 2015 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, 2015 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, 2015 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, 2015 Annual Social and Economic Supplement, Table POV01 (Below 50 percent of poverty; White alone, not Hispanic; Black alone; Asian alone; Hispanic of any race).

For further information on poverty, visit the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, 2015 Annual Social and Economic Supplement.

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 (14.1 million) rather than the number of all poor children (14.7 million).