

# Child Poverty in America 2018: National Analysis



Official poverty data released by the U.S. Census Bureau on September 10, 2019 show roughly 11.9 million American children lived in poverty in 2018, about 890,000 fewer than in 2017. The national child poverty rate declined from 17.4 percent\* in 2017 to 16.4 percent in 2018. Despite this modest progress, children remained the poorest age group in the nation and Black child poverty increased.

## Child Poverty

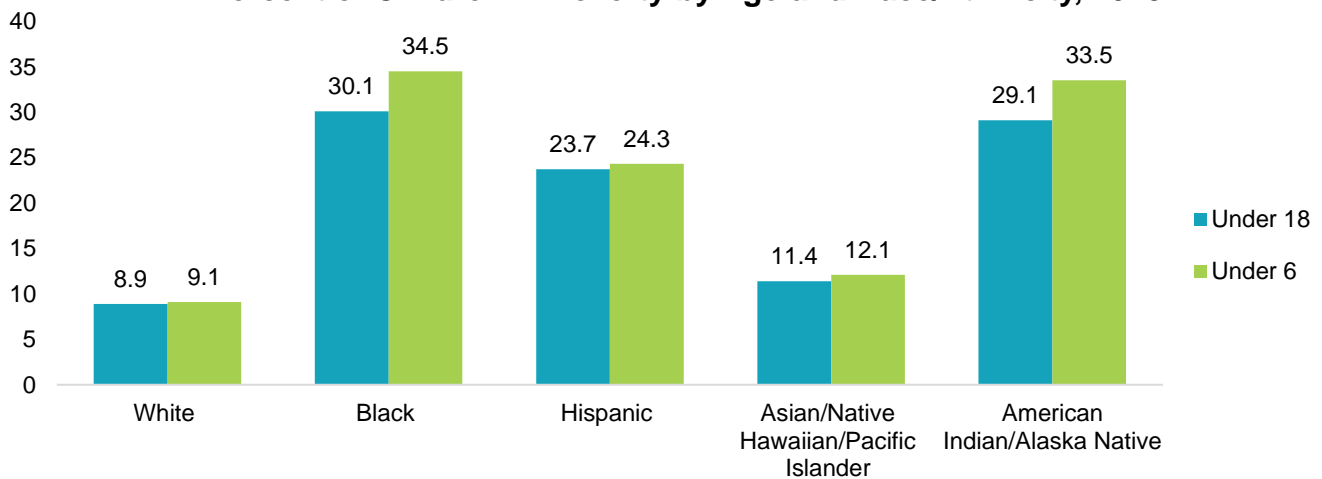
In total, 38.1 million people in America were poor in 2018 and nearly a third of them were children. About 1 in 6 children—16.2 percent—were poor in 2018, compared with 10.7 percent of people ages 18-64 and 9.7 percent of people ages 65 and older.

- **11,869,173** children lived in poverty in 2018.
- The child poverty rate was **16.2 percent** in 2018, a decrease from **17.4 percent\*** in 2017.
- Poverty is defined as an **annual income below \$25,465** for a family of four with two children, which amounts to about **\$2,122** a month, **\$490** a week or **\$70** a day.

### Child Poverty by Age and Race/Ethnicity, 2018

	White		Black		Hispanic		Asian/ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander		American Indian/ Alaska Native	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Under 18	3,264,566	8.9	3,042,507	30.1	4,436,361	23.7	465,808	11.4	194,367	29.1
Under 6	1,039,941	9.1	1,131,589	34.5	1,488,692	24.3	159,684	12.1	69,050	33.5

### Percent of Children in Poverty by Age and Race/Ethnicity, 2018



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

## Extreme Child Poverty

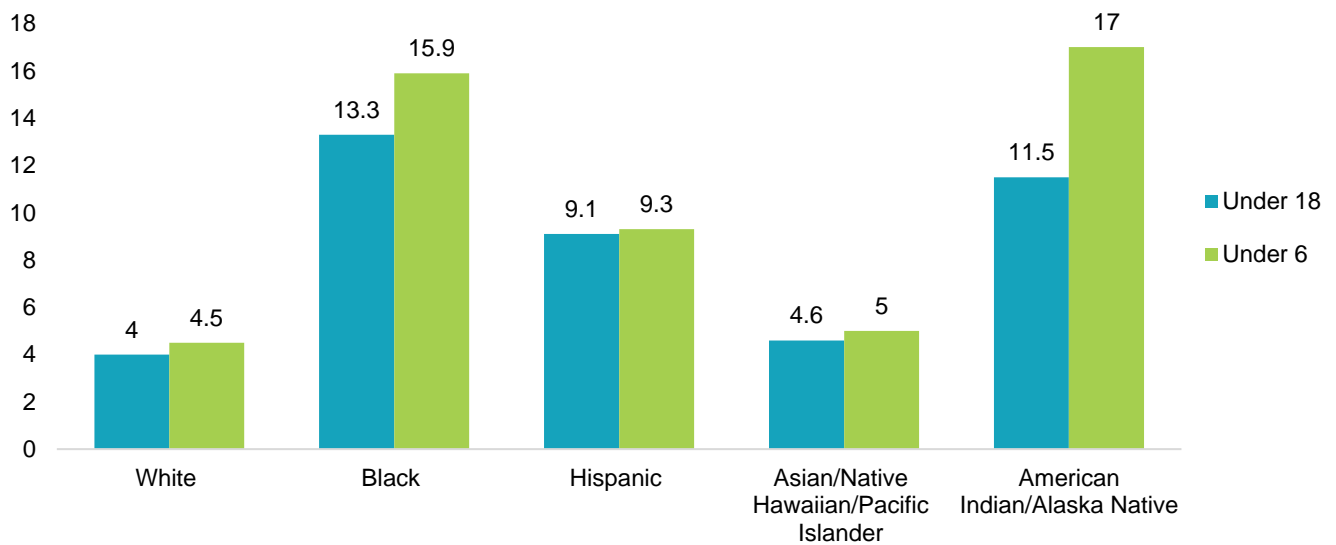
In 2018, more than 5.0 million children—about 1 in 14—lived in extreme poverty, defined as an annual income of less than half the poverty level, or **\$12,732** for a family of four, which amounts to about **\$1,061** a month, **\$245** a week, or **\$35** a day.

- The number of children living in extreme poverty: **5,041,848**
- The percentage of children living in extreme poverty: **6.9 percent**, down from 8.7 percent\* in 2017.

**Extreme Child Poverty by Age and Race/Ethnicity, 2018**

	White		Black		Hispanic		Asian/ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander		American Indian/ Alaska Native	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Under 18	1,480,071	4.0	1,342,711	13.3	1,712,441	9.1	188,420	4.6	77,126	11.5
Under 6	512,171	4.5	521,574	15.9	571,170	9.3	66,620	5.0	34,967	17.0

**Percent of Children in Extreme Poverty by Age and Race/Ethnicity, 2018**



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

## Young Children

Our youngest children suffer the highest poverty rates. In 2018, more than 1 in 6 infants, toddlers and preschoolers ages 0-5 (**17.4 percent**) were poor during their years of greatest brain development.

- The number of children under 6 living in poverty: **4,079,701**
- The number of children under 6 living in extreme poverty: **1,813,924**
  - Nearly half (44.5 percent) of all poor children under 6 lived in extreme poverty.
  - About 1 in 13 children under 6 (**7.7 percent**) were extremely poor.

## Children of Color

Black, American Indian/Alaska Native and Hispanic children continue to suffer disproportionately from poverty, with the youngest children at greatest risk.

- **Nearly 1 in 3** Black and American Indian/Alaska Native and **nearly 1 in 4** Hispanic children were poor in 2018 compared with **1 in 11** White children.
- **More than 1 in 8** Black children, **1 in 9** American Indian/Alaska Native children, and **1 in 11** Hispanic children lived in extreme poverty compared with **1 in 25** White children. American Indian/Alaska Native and Black children were 3 times more likely to live in extreme poverty than White children.
- **More than 1 in 3** Black and American Indian/Alaska Native children under 6 were poor and **1 in 6** were extremely poor.
- While Black children had the highest poverty rates, Hispanic children accounted for the largest number of poor children (**4,436,361**) followed by White children (**3,264,566**) and Black children (**3,042,507**).

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

7.7 million poor children lived in single-parent families in 2018, 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.

- **58.0 percent** of all poor children lived in single-mother families
  - **8.9 percent** lived in single-father families
  - **33.2 percent** lived in married-couple families
- The poverty rate among the more than 22.5 million children in single-parent families was **34.1 percent**, down from 36.8 percent\* in 2017.
- The poverty rate among the nearly 50 million children in married-couple families was **7.6 percent**.

## Work Status of Family Members<sup>2</sup>

- More than two-thirds of poor children (**70.3 percent**) had at least one family member who worked in 2018, and more than one-third (**35.2 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 4.5 million to 4.2 million.
- Poverty among children in families with at least one worker decreased slightly, from 12.7 percent\* to 11.8 percent.
- Poverty among children in families with at least one full-time year-round worker decreased from 7.3\* to 6.9 percent.

## 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 nearly 10.1 million children above poverty in 2018.

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: 4,735,000 | • SSI: 497,000                     |
| • SNAP: 1,381,000                   | • TANF/General Assistance: 216,000 |
| • Social Security: 1,471,000        | • WIC: 169,000                     |
| • Housing Subsidies: 936,000        | • Unemployment Insurance: 103,000  |
| • School Lunch: 800,000             | • LIHEAP: 72,000                   |
| • Child Support Received: 429,000   | • Workers' Compensation: 27,000    |

<sup>1</sup> Percentages of poor children living in single-mother families, married couple families, and single-father families are calculated using the number of poor children related to the head of household (11.5 million) rather than the total number of poor children (11.9 million).

<sup>2</sup> Percentages of poor children in working families are calculated using the number of poor children in related families (11.5 million) rather than the total number of poor children (11.9 million).

## Notes and Citations:

All data are from the Annual Social and Economic Supplement of the U.S. Census Current Population Survey and reflect poverty during the 2018 calendar year.

Asterisks (\*) have been used to designate cases where 2017 data has been adjusted to reflect changes in the Census Bureau's processing system and allow for comparisons with 2018 data. 2017 numbers reported here differ from those previously published by the Census Bureau and our previous factsheets.

### CHILD POVERTY:

**Poor Children Under 18 and Under 6:** U.S. Census Bureau. 2019. "Current Population Survey, 2018 Annual Social and Economic Supplement." Customized tables generated using Data Ferrett. <https://dataferrett.census.gov/>. Calculations by Children's Defense Fund.

**Children in Extreme Poverty Under 18 and Under 6:** U.S. Census Bureau. 2019. "Current Population Survey, 2018 Annual Social and Economic Supplement." Customized tables generated using Data Ferrett. <https://dataferrett.census.gov/>. Calculations by Children's Defense Fund.

**Poverty Thresholds (dollar amounts used to determine poverty status):** U.S. Census Bureau. 2019. "Poverty Thresholds for 2018 by Size of Family and Number of Related Children Under 18 Years."

### FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS:

**Poor Children by Family Structure:** U.S. Census Bureau. 2019. "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. Census Bureau. 2019. "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 6:** U.S. Census Bureau. 2019. "Current Population Survey, 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. Customized tables generated using Data Ferrett. <https://dataferrett.census.gov/>. Calculations by Children's Defense Fund.

**Children in Extreme Poverty Under 18 and Under 6:** U.S. Census Bureau. 2019. "Current Population Survey, 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. Customized tables generated using Data Ferrett. <https://dataferrett.census.gov/>. Calculations by Children's Defense Fund.