



Each autumn, the Census Bureau releases information regarding poverty and income in the United States for the previous year. This year's release included disturbing news for American families and their children.

From 2008 to 2009, the number of America's children that live in poverty grew by close to 2 million. Indeed in 2009, child poverty reached a level of 20.7 percent – a rate of more than one in five and totaling more than 15.5 million children.

For decades, children in America have suffered higher rates of poverty than any other age group. Since 1974, no age group has had a higher percentage of people living in poverty than children. Last year was no different. Of all the people living in poverty in this country in 2009, 35.5 percent of them were children (while children comprise about 25 percent of the total population). This is up from 19 percent in 2008. In both years, and indeed for more than 30 years, children have been overrepresented among the ranks of the very poor.

This national trend is evident in virtually every state across the country, with only a few exceptions. 46 states and the District of Columbia saw an increase in the percentage of their children living in poverty. Only four states (Connecticut, Louisiana, North Dakota, and Oklahoma) bucked the national trend and saw their child poverty rates actually decrease, though it should be noted that of these four states, two still have a child poverty rates above the national average.

### *Regional Trends*

While it is true that almost the entire country experienced rising child poverty last year, states in the South historically tend to have higher rates of child poverty than the rest of the country. This trend continued in 2009. Mississippi tops the list with 31 percent, followed by Arkansas at 27.2 percent. Indeed, among the ten states with the highest rates of child poverty, all but one is south of the Ohio River (the exception being New Mexico). With a 13.9 percent child poverty rate, Virginia was the only Southern state with a child poverty rate lower than the national rate. On the other hand, the states with the

### HIGHLIGHTS OF STATE-BY-STATE TRENDS

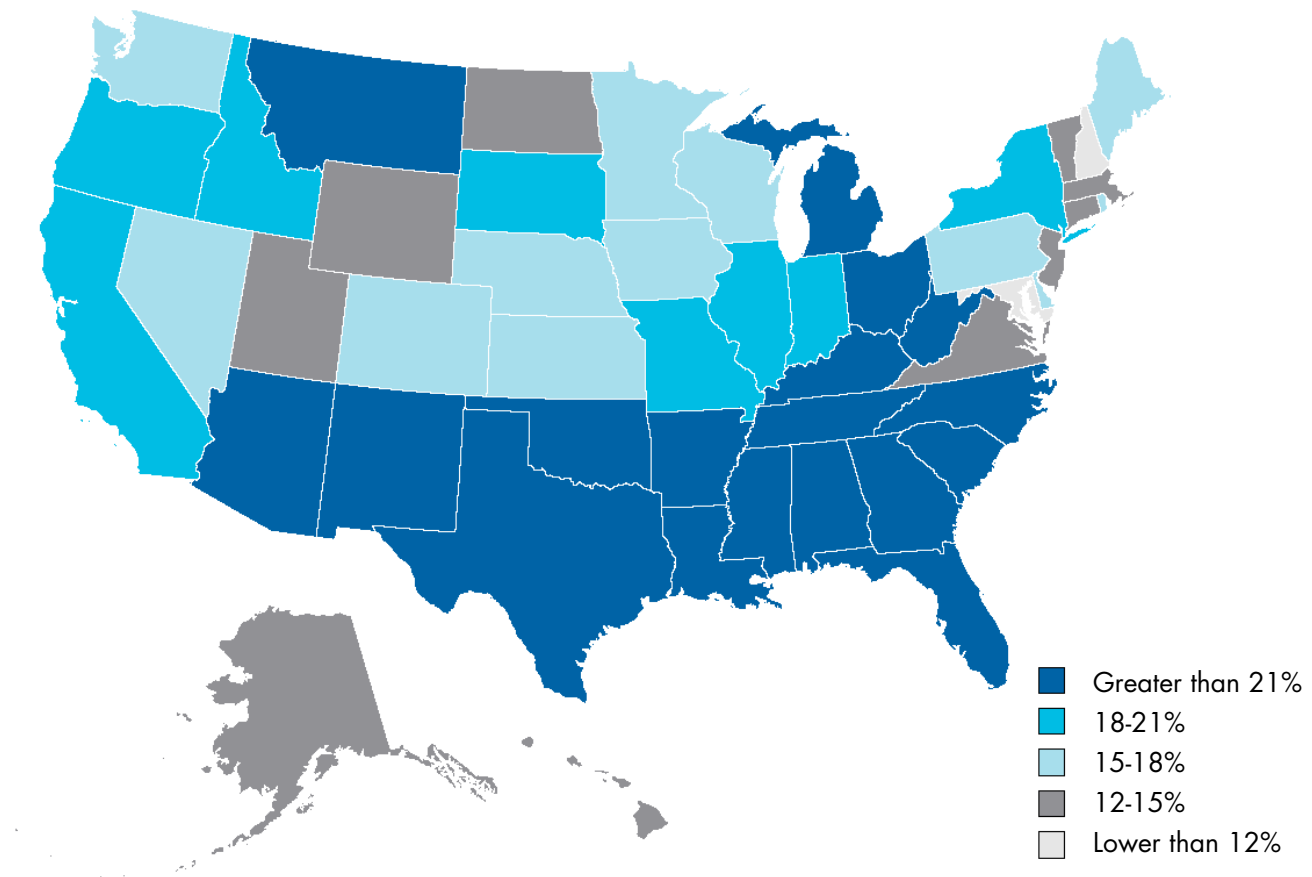
- 46 states and the District of the Columbia saw increases in the percentage of children living in poverty from 2008-2009. Census data from the first year of the recession, 2007, showed increases in child poverty for 26 states.
- 24 states have seen their child poverty rate rise in both 2008 and 2009; 6 states have seen their child poverty rate rise each year since the start of the recession in 2007.
- The biggest rise in child poverty occurred in Hawaii, with its rate of children in poverty increasing from 10% to 13.8% (a 38% increase – although still a rate well below the national average). The biggest drop was in North Dakota, with its child poverty rate falling from 15.3% in 2008 to 13% in 2009.
- In 2009, 19 states and DC had child poverty rates higher than or equal to the national average of 20.7%.
- The state with the highest child poverty rate in 2009 was Mississippi with 31% of its children living in poverty. Even though this rate is up by 2 percentage points from last year, Mississippi was also the state with the highest child poverty rate in 2008, 2007, and 2006 (not including the District of Columbia).
- The state with the lowest children in poverty rate in 2009 was New Hampshire, as it was in 2008, 2007, and 2006. However, even New Hampshire's rate is up over the previous year, by 1.8 percentage points.

lowest child poverty rates are less clustered. Of the ten states with the lowest child poverty rates, five are in the Northeast region and the other five are scattered among states as geographically diverse as Maryland, Utah, and Alaska.

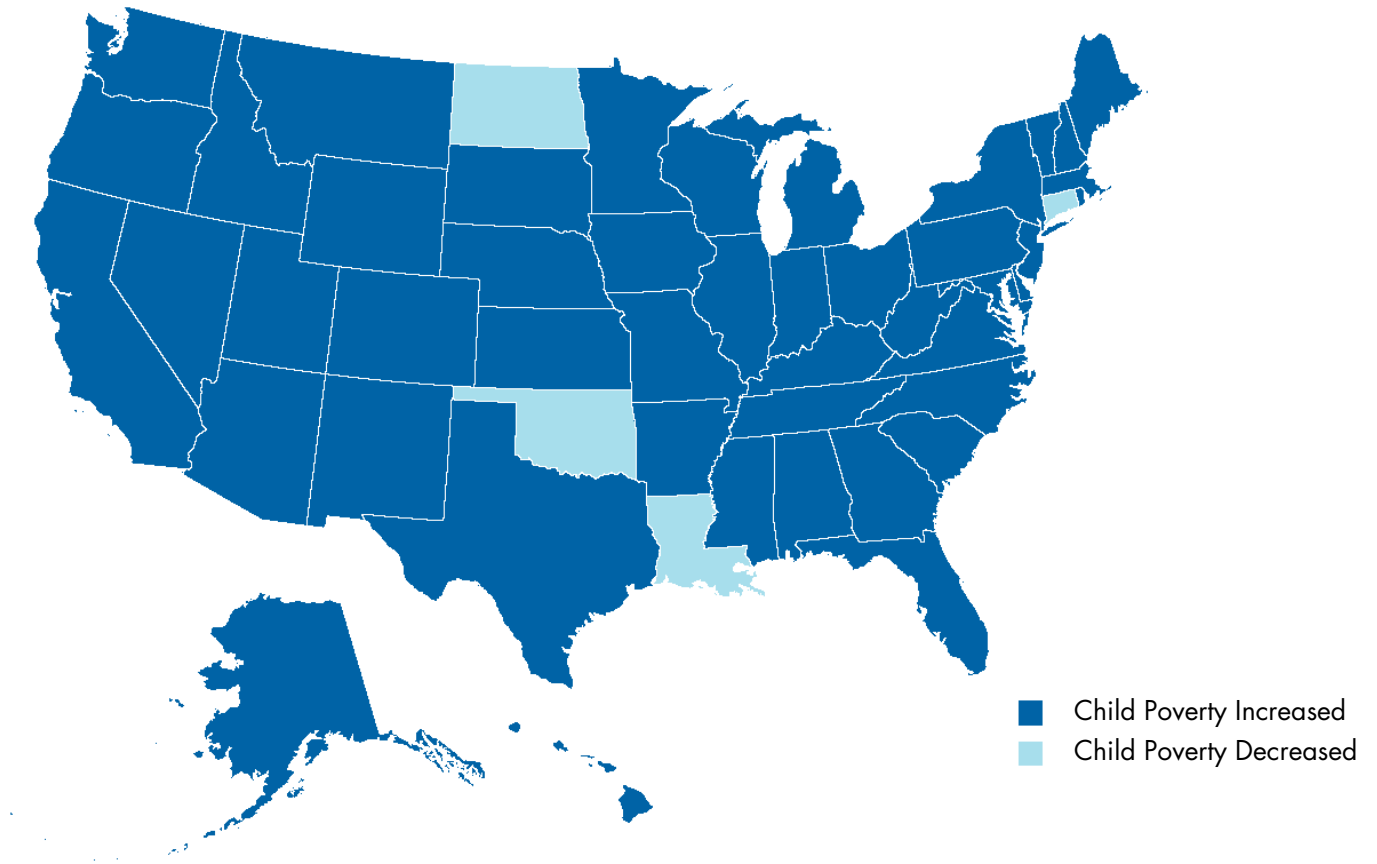
### *Limitations of the Data*

The national numbers used in this report come from the US Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey – Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance in the United States: 2009. The state numbers used in this report come from the American Community Survey, 2009, 1-Year Estimates. These numbers are generated from sampling, and as such, there is potential for error. When using subsets of data (like children in specific states), the margin of error grows. Because of this unavoidable sampling error, for many of the differences between rates from one year to the next, we cannot say with a high degree of certainty, that the difference is “real”. That is to say some of the differences may not reach the level of statistical significance at the generally accepted threshold. For more information on each survey, please visit [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov).

**Map 1: Child Poverty Rates, 2009**



**Map 2: Change in Child Poverty Rates, 2008-2009**



**Table 1: Percentage of Children Below the Federal Poverty Line**

<b>STATES</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>
<b>Alabama</b>	24.3	21.7	24.7
<b>Alaska</b>	11.5	11	12.8
<b>Arizona</b>	20.2	20.8	23.4
<b>Arkansas</b>	25.8	24.9	27.2
<b>California</b>	17.3	18.5	19.9
<b>Colorado</b>	16.3	15.1	17.4
<b>Connecticut</b>	11.1	12.5	12.1
<b>Delaware</b>	14.7	13.6	16.5
<b>District of Columbia</b>	22.7	25.9	29.4
<b>Florida</b>	17.1	18.3	21.3
<b>Georgia</b>	19.7	20.1	22.3
<b>Hawaii</b>	9.8	10	13.8
<b>Idaho</b>	15.9	15.8	18.1
<b>Illinois</b>	16.6	17	18.9
<b>Indiana</b>	17.3	18.3	20
<b>Iowa</b>	13.6	14.4	15.7
<b>Kansas</b>	14.6	14.5	17.6
<b>Kentucky</b>	23.9	23.5	25.6
<b>Louisiana</b>	26.8	24.7	24.2
<b>Maine</b>	15.4	15.8	17.1
<b>Maryland</b>	10.5	10.2	11.6
<b>Massachusetts</b>	12.9	12	13.1
<b>Michigan</b>	19.4	19.4	22.5
<b>Minnesota</b>	12	11.4	14.1
<b>Mississippi</b>	29.3	30.4	31
<b>Missouri</b>	17.7	18.6	20.7
<b>Montana</b>	18.3	20.6	21.4
<b>Nebraska</b>	14.9	13.4	15.2
<b>Nevada</b>	15.3	15	17.6
<b>New Hampshire</b>	8.8	9	10.8
<b>New Jersey</b>	11.6	12.5	13.5
<b>New Mexico</b>	25.5	24.2	25.3
<b>New York</b>	19.4	19.1	20
<b>North Carolina</b>	19.5	19.9	22.5
<b>North Dakota</b>	13.4	15.3	13
<b>Ohio</b>	18.5	18.5	21.9

<b>Oklahoma</b>	22.5	22.6	22.2
<b>Oregon</b>	16.9	18.1	19.2
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	16.3	16.8	17.1
<b>Rhode Island</b>	17.5	15.5	16.9
<b>South Carolina</b>	20.9	21.7	24.4
<b>South Dakota</b>	16.8	17.6	18.5
<b>Tennessee</b>	23	21.8	23.9
<b>Texas</b>	23.2	22.5	24.4
<b>Utah</b>	11	10.5	12.2
<b>Vermont</b>	12.4	13.2	13.3
<b>Virginia</b>	13	13.8	13.9
<b>Washington</b>	15	14.3	16.2
<b>West Virginia</b>	22.8	23	23.6
<b>Wisconsin</b>	14.4	13.3	16.7
<b>Wyoming</b>	11.6	11.6	12.6



*First Focus is a bipartisan advocacy organization committed to making children and their families a priority in federal policy and budget decisions. To learn more visit [www.firstfocus.net](http://www.firstfocus.net)*

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