Data from 2016 released this month indicated positive news for children, with the national child poverty rate dropping from 19.7 percent in 2015 to 18 percent in 2016, resulting in 1.3 million less children living in poverty. (The official poverty line for a family of four with two children is $24,339).

Yet we know we can do better. Children experience poverty at a rate that is 62.5 percent higher than adults. They make up 23 percent of the U.S. population, but account for 33 percent of the population living in poverty. But these numbers don't tell the whole story. Consider that:

- There are large disparities for children of color: the poverty rate for Black and Hispanic children continues to be significantly higher than for white children, with rates of 30.8 percent and 26.6 percent respectively compared to 10.8 percent for White, non-Hispanic children.

- Our youngest children continue to experience higher levels of poverty while undergoing critical stages of cognitive and physical development. There were 19.5 percent of related children under 6 living in poverty in 2016.

- We still have 6 million children (8.2 percent) living in extreme poverty. These are children living in households with incomes bringing in just over $12,000 a year, meaning they struggle to afford necessities to support their children's healthy development.

Poverty Rates for U.S. Children and Adults
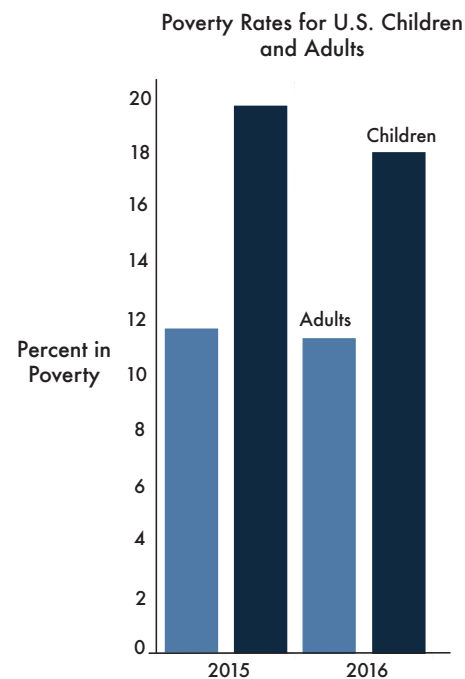
*Data: US Census , Income & Poverty in the United States, 2016*

Highlights of State-by-State Trends

Ten states saw a statistically significant decrease[1] of more than 10 percent in the percentage of children living in poverty from 2015-2016: Connecticut, Washington, Arkansas, Utah, Nebraska, Oregon, Kansas, Montana, New Hampshire, and Hawaii, which had the largest reduction of 28.9 percent.

While the rate of child poverty increased in New Mexico, Oklahoma, Louisiana, North Dakota, the District of Columbia, and Vermont between 2015 and 2016, these changes were not statistically significant.

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[1] Statistical significance calculated at the 90% level for this fact sheet. Rhode Island, Delaware, and Wyoming had decreases over 10 percent that were not statistically significant

New Hampshire has the lowest child poverty rate in the country, at 7.9 percent and Puerto Rico had the highest, at 56 percent. New Mexico was the state with the highest rate, at 30 percent.

Data: US Census American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, 2016
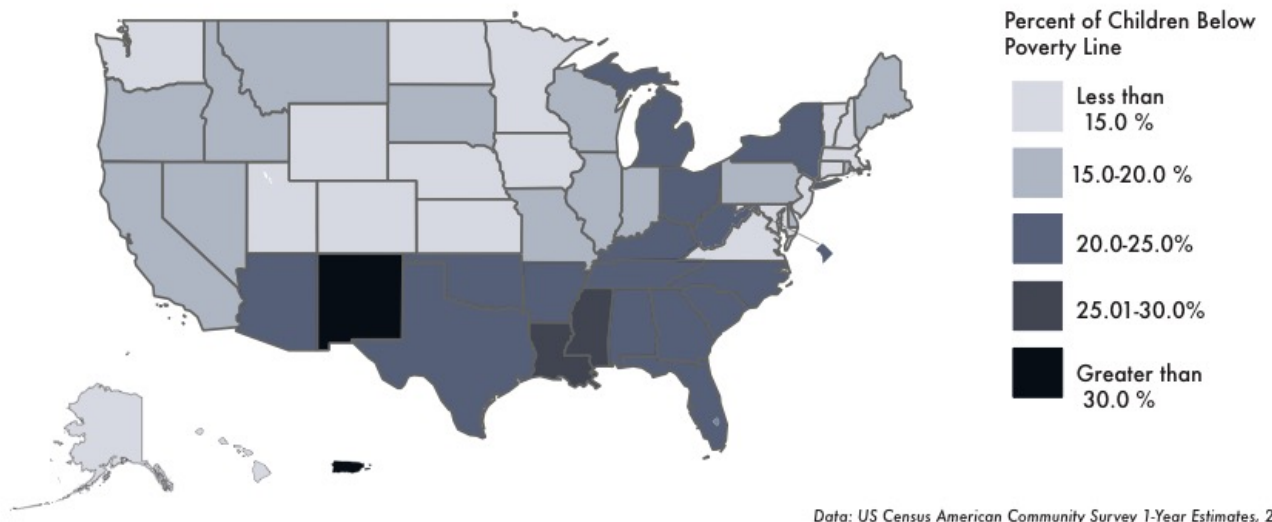
States in the South and Southwest historically tend to have higher rates of child poverty than the rest of the country. This trend continued in 2016, for among the 11 states and territories with the highest rates of child poverty (Puerto Rico, New Mexico, Mississippi, Louisiana, District of Columbia, Kentucky, Alabama, West Virginia, Arkansas, Arizona and South Carolina), the majority are concentrated in these two regions of the US. The majority of these states and territories also have fairly diverse child populations. In each of the ten states, with the exception of West Virginia, Kentucky, and Arkansas, at least 20 percent of the child population is either Black or Hispanic.

On the other hand, the states with the lowest child poverty rates are less clustered. Of the 11 states with the lowest child poverty rates, three are in the Northeast region (New Hampshire, Connecticut and Massachusetts) and four are in the Western region (Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, and Washington) and the rest are scattered: Hawaii, North Dakota, Minnesota, and Maryland.

Limitations of the Data

The national numbers used in this report come from the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplements, Current Population Reports, Income and Poverty in the United States: 2016. The state numbers used in this report come from the American Community Survey, 2016 1-Year Estimates. These numbers are generated from sampling, and as such, there is potential for error. For more information on each survey, please visit www.census.gov.

For more information, please contact Cara Baldari at carab@firstfocus.org. Data analysis and graphs by Rachel Merker (rmerker@firstfocus.org).