

Our nation's economic security depends on the well-being of our children, who are our future workforce and tax base. Yet data recently released from the U.S. Census Bureau indicates that millions of children in the U.S. are living in poverty and trying to thrive but facing barriers to success at every stage of their development.

Despite steady economic growth and low unemployment rates, the U.S. Census Bureau reports that 17.5 percent (12.8 million) of children in the U.S. were living in poverty in 2017, and there was not a statistically significant decrease from 2016. To provide some context, the official poverty line for a family of four with two children is \$24,858 a year.

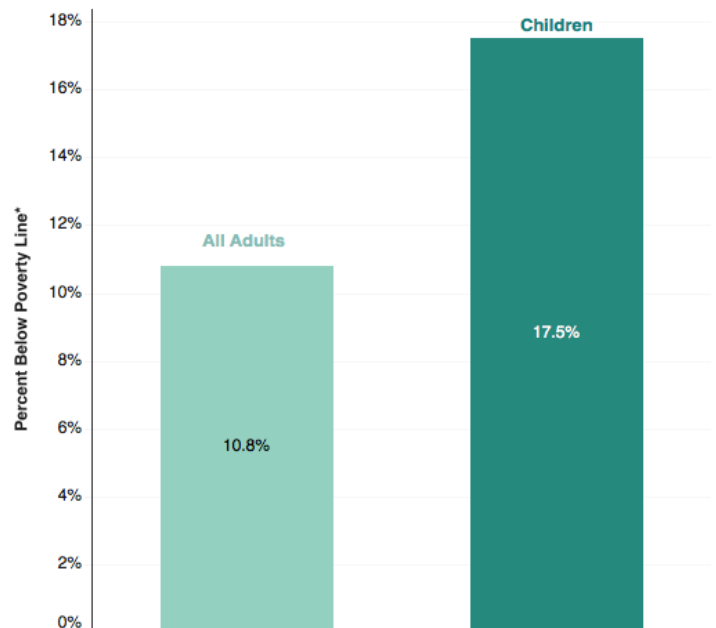
Children are 62 percent more likely to experience poverty than adults. They make up 22.7 percent of the U.S. population, but account for 32.3 percent of the population living in poverty.

These numbers grow more alarming when taking into account children who are living in households just beyond the poverty line. Nearly 40 percent of U.S. children (28.4 million) were living in low-income households in 2017, measured as an annual income of less than \$50,000 a year for a family of four with two children. These children are living in households that are just a paycheck away from falling below the poverty line, and may experience bouts of poverty throughout the year.

Meanwhile, nearly 6 million children (8 percent) lived in extreme poverty last year. 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.

Due to our country's long history of structural racism and discrimination, the poverty rate for Black and Hispanic children continues to be significantly higher than for White children, with rates of 29 percent and 25 percent respectively compared to 10.5 percent for White, non-Hispanic children. This includes children in immigrant families—18 million children live in a family with at least one immigrant parent—who have higher rates of poverty due to unique cultural and systemic barriers to obtaining economic security.

Children were 62 Percent More Likely to Live Below the Poverty Line than Adults in 2017



\*In 2017, the Federal Poverty Line was \$24,858 for a family of four  
Data: US Census, *Income and Poverty in the United States: 2017*

Our youngest children also continue to experience higher levels of poverty, which is especially harmful as they undergo critical stages of cognitive and physical development. Nearly 1 in 5 (19.5 percent) of young children under 6 were living in poverty in 2017.

## Highlights of State-by-State Trends

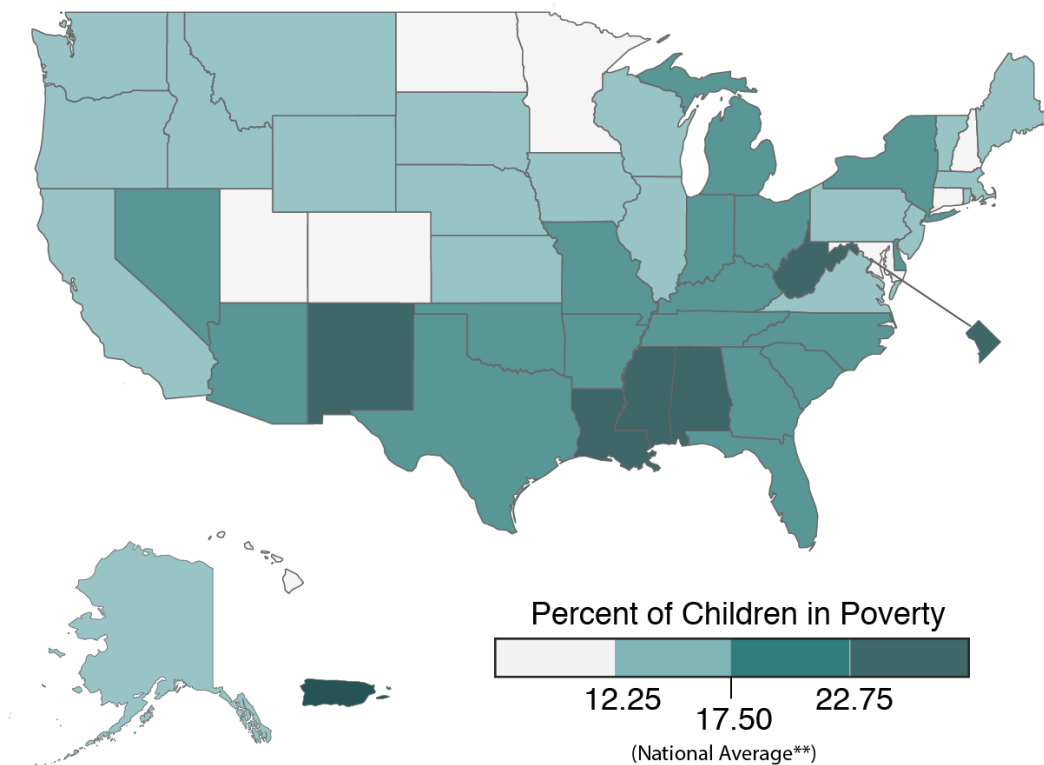
The states with the highest rates of child poverty shifted somewhat from 2016 to 2017:

- Louisiana now has the highest child poverty rate in the country at 28 percent. New Mexico had the highest rate in 2016.
- The child poverty rate was 57.8 percent in Puerto Rico, more than double the rate of Louisiana.
- Due a decrease of over 10 percent in child poverty, Arizona is no longer in the top 10 for states with the highest rates.

The states with low child poverty rates were fairly consistent with 2016 data, and the 10 states with the lowest rates include New Hampshire, Utah, North Dakota, Hawaii, Minnesota, Colorado, Maryland, Iowa, Connecticut, and Maine.

### 2017 Child Poverty Rates by State, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico\*

The official 2017 federal poverty line was \$24,858 for a family of four with two children



\*The child poverty rate was 57.8 percent in Puerto Rico in 2017--more than double the rate of the highest state in the Continental US, Louisiana.  
\*\*According to the The Current Population Report estimate, which excludes Puerto Rico

Data: US Census. State estimates from American Community Survey 2017 1-Year Estimates: Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months. National average child poverty rate from Current Population Reports, Income and Poverty in the United States: 2017

States in the south and southwest continue to have higher rates of child poverty than the rest of the country. Among the 10 states and territories with the highest rates of child poverty (Puerto Rico, Louisiana, New Mexico, Mississippi, West Virginia, District of Columbia, Alabama, South Carolina, Arkansas, and Kentucky), the majority are concentrated in these two regions of the U.S.

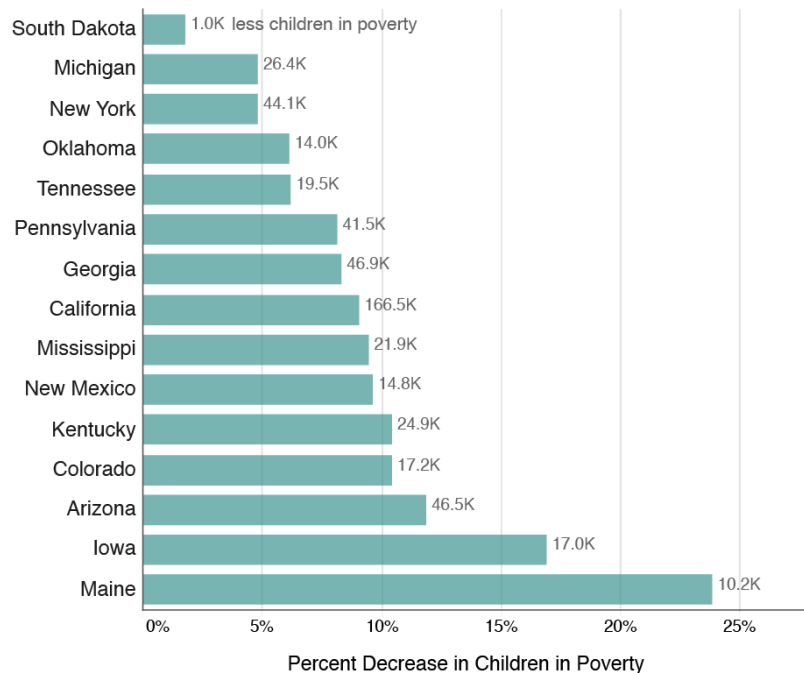
The majority of these states and territories also have fairly diverse child populations. In each of the 10 states and territories, with the exception of West Virginia, Kentucky, and Arkansas, at least 20 percent of the child population is either Black or Hispanic.

There were 15 states that saw a statistically significant decrease in the percentage of children living in poverty from 2016-2017. Maine had the largest reduction of 28.9 percent. Some of the states with the highest poverty rates in the U.S. also saw the biggest decreases in 2017, including New Mexico, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Arizona.

New Hampshire was the only state to see a statistically significant *increase* in its child poverty rate from 2016 to 2017. Yet it also has the lowest child poverty rate in the country at 10.3 percent.

In the coming decades, there will be far fewer workers to support our economy and replace those who are retiring. It is therefore now more critical than ever to invest in our kids and reduce child poverty in the U.S. Everyone—regardless of socioeconomic status—benefits from strategies that lift children out of poverty.

**States with Statistically Significant Decreases in Child Poverty from 2016 to 2017**



Data: American Community Survey 2017 1-Year Estimates: Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months

## 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: 2017*. The state numbers used in this report come from the American Community Survey, 2017 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](http://www.census.gov).