



The Kid Angle

Kid-focused news from First Focus on Children

Child poverty is a policy choice, reports confirm September 15, 2022

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The astounding decline in child poverty was, hands down, the story of the week.

Two separate reports determined that [child poverty has declined 59% over the last three decades](#) and that U.S. policies cut it [nearly in half last year alone](#). Both sources credited multiple factors for the declines but cited one common denominator: **Government policies that lifted children out of poverty, in particular, improved and expanded tax credits.**

This excellent news definitely deserves celebration — and introspection. Rather than use it to declare victory over child poverty, lawmakers must apply its lessons to finish the job once and for all.

The facts:

- More than 3.8 million children still live in poverty, a figure that climbs to more than 11 million if you discount government assistance
- Racial disparities have narrowed since before the pandemic, but children of color continue to experience significantly higher rates of poverty than their white peers.
- Children in Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories have higher rates of poverty because of limited eligibility for assistance
- After Congress' improved Child Tax Credit, expired in January, nearly 4 million children slid back into poverty
- The threshold for "poverty" — as measured by the government — is so low that even children living at twice that level struggle with material hardship. Consider: The threshold for the Supplemental Poverty Measure, which accounts for government assistance, is roughly [\\$31,000 a year for a family with two children](#).

None of this is meant to take the shine off the good news. It's simply intended to make the point that **child poverty is — and has always been — a policy decision.** And that much more work must be done to reduce — and ultimately to end — child poverty.

The Census figures and the Child Trends report both confirm that we have the tools. Now Congress has to use them. To track progress on child poverty, Congress also must pass a [national child poverty reduction target](#), a tool that has worked in the U.K. and in Canada, and that the National Academy of Sciences has deemed critical.

Congress must continue to use these tools over and over, each and every year, until no child is poor, hungry or homeless in the richest country in the world.



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