

Nearly half of American children living near poverty line

March 2 2016

Nearly half of children in the United States live dangerously close to the poverty line, according to new research from the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health. Basic Facts about Low-Income Children, the center's annual series of profiles on child poverty in America, illustrates the severity of economic instability and poverty conditions faced by more than 31 million children throughout the United States. Using the latest data from the American Community Survey, NCCP researchers found that while the total number of children in the U.S. has remained about the same since 2008, more children today are likely to live in families barely able to afford their most basic needs.

"These data challenge the prevailing beliefs that many still hold about what [poverty](#) looks like and which [children](#) in this country are most likely to be at risk," said Renée Wilson-Simmons, DrPH, NCCP director. "The fact is, despite the significant gains we've made in expanding nutrition and health insurance programs to reach the children most in need, millions of children are living in families still struggling to make ends meet in our low-growth, low-wage economy."

According to NCCP researchers, the number of poor children in the U.S. grew by 18 percent from 2008 to 2014 (the latest available data), and the number of children living in low-income households grew by 10 percent. NCCP defines a low-income household as one where incomes fall below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Threshold (e.g., \$48,016 for a family of four with two children in 2014). A family is considered poor if its

earnings are below 100 percent of the poverty threshold (e.g., \$24,008 for a family of four with two children in 2014).

Published annually since 2009, Basic Facts about Low-Income Children profiles demographic and socioeconomic conditions of poor and low-income children in fact sheets for five age groups, from infants and toddlers to adolescents. Fact sheet data are widely cited by policymakers, researchers, advocates, and the media as authoritative. NCCP's annual fact sheets on child poverty in America are available online at www.nccp.org/publications/fact_sheets.html.

These are some of the findings in the 2016 edition of Basic Facts about Low-Income Children:

- More than four in ten U.S. children are living close to the poverty line. In 2014, 44 percent of children under age 18 (31.4 million) lived in low-income households and 21 percent lived in poor families (15.4 million). This is still much higher than at the start of the Great Recession in 2008, when 39 percent of children were considered low income and 18 percent lived in poor households.
- Children remain more likely than adults to live in poverty. While 44 percent of children live in low-income households, only one-third of adults between 18 and 64 years of age live in these households. In addition, children are more than twice as likely as adults 65 years and older to live in poor families.
- America's youngest children are still those most likely to live in low-income or poor households. Some 47 percent of children age 5 years or younger live in [low-income families](#), compared to 45 percent of children age 6 to 11 years (10.8 million), and 40 percent of children age 12 to 17 years (9.7 million).
- Disparities in child poverty persist along racial lines. More than 60 percent of black, Hispanic, and Native American kids live in

low-income families, compared to 30 percent of Asian and white children—a dynamic largely unchanged since 2008.

- Many children living in poverty have parents with some higher education, and many live in two-parent households. While higher parental education decreases the likelihood that a child will live in a low-income or poor household, nearly half of children living in poverty (48 percent) have a parent with at least some college education. Though data shows that children who live with married parents are much less likely to be poor or low income compared to children who live with a single parent, nearly half of children (47 percent) in low-income families and 36 percent of children in poor families (5.5 million) live with married parents.

Provided by Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health

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