

# CAPITOL FACTS & FIGURES

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## Childhood Poverty

The number of poor children has been on the rise for the past 10 years, although those increases vary across state and racial and ethnic lines. Higher childhood poverty rates mean bigger costs to states, including future health and criminal justice expenses.

**Childhood poverty rates declined throughout most of the 1990s, but have been rising again since 2000.**

- According to the National Center for Children in Poverty at Columbia University,<sup>1</sup> more than 15 million children in the U.S.—or 21 percent of all those under age 18—live in households below the federal poverty level, set at \$22,500 for a family of four.
- Between 2000 and 2009, the number of children living in poverty jumped by 33 percent, or 3.8 million children. Nine percent of children live in households that earn 50 percent or less of the poverty level, which is considered to be “extremely poor.”
- From 2000 to 2009, childhood poverty rates dropped in seven states, with West Virginia (a 2 percent drop) and Louisiana (a 3 percent drop) seeing the biggest improvements.
- Over the same time period, rates in five states remained the same, while rates increased in 38 states. Increases in the childhood poverty rate ranged from a low of 1 percent in Connecticut and Hawaii to a high of 9 percent in Michigan and 7 percent in Colorado.

**There are significant racial and ethnic disparities in childhood poverty rates, as well as differences across states.**

- Twelve percent of white children live in households at or below the poverty level—a rate nearly three times less than that of black children.
- Thirty-six percent of black children live in households at or below the poverty level. In the 10 most populous states, child poverty rates among black children range from a low of 30 percent in California and New York to a high of 46 percent in Ohio and Michigan.
- Thirty-four percent of American Indian children, 33 percent of Hispanic children, 15 percent of Asian children and 24 percent of children identified as some other race live in poor families.
- Childhood poverty rates are highest in the South, with Mississippi (31 percent), Arkansas (27



percent) and Kentucky (26 percent) having the highest rates in the country in 2009. New Hampshire (11 percent), Connecticut (12 percent) and Maryland (12 percent) have the lowest rates of childhood poverty in the U.S.

**Childhood poverty negatively affects economic and social outcomes with big costs to states.**

- According to the Population Research Bureau,<sup>2</sup> childhood poverty leads to negative health, social and economic consequences that follow children into adulthood.
- Compared to other children, poor children are less healthy, have lower educational achievement and are more likely to become involved with the criminal justice system. In adulthood, those children are less likely to attend college or maintain steady employment.
- At 4 years old, children in poverty are 18 months below what is normal for their age group in reading and math—a gap that is still present at age 10.<sup>3</sup>
- Childhood poverty costs the U.S. \$500 billion every year in lost earnings, involvement with the criminal justice system and in costs associated with poor health outcomes, according to a 2007 study<sup>4</sup> by the National Poverty Center at the University of Michigan.
- The Annie E. Casey Foundation, using Poverty Center figures, calculates that in 14 states, child poverty comes at an annual cost of more than \$10 billion. California has the highest cost at \$63.9 billion, followed by Texas (\$57.5 billion) and New York (\$33.4 billion). Even in Wyoming, the smallest state, childhood poverty costs the state about \$500 million a year.



# Childhood Poverty

States	Poverty Estimate All Ages <sup>5</sup>	Poverty Percent All Ages <sup>5</sup>	Poverty Estimate Under Age 18 <sup>5</sup>	Poverty Percent Under Age 18 <sup>5</sup>	Change in Poverty Rate, 2000-2009 <sup>6</sup>	Median Household Income <sup>5</sup>	Cost of Poverty (\$ billions) <sup>7</sup>
United States	42,868,163	14%	14,656,962.00	20%	3%	\$50,221	\$500
Alabama	805,223	18%	274,243.00	25%	0%	\$40,547	\$9.50
Alaska	61,949	9%	22,221.00	12%	-2%	\$66,712	\$1.00
Arizona	1,065,728	17%	396,006.00	23%	3%	\$48,711	\$11.70
Arkansas	519,026	19%	185,268.00	27%	2%	\$37,888	\$6.20
California	5,132,640	14%	1,846,994.00	20%	1%	\$58,925	\$63.90
Colorado	618,676	13%	201,208.00	17%	3%	\$55,735	\$6.80
Connecticut	318,008	9%	95,570.00	12%	0%	\$66,906	\$3.30
Delaware	96,409	11%	33,851.00	17%	2%	\$56,985	\$1.20
Florida	2,712,692	15%	857,326.00	22%	3%	\$44,755	\$25.90
Georgia	1,585,116	17%	575,429.00	23%	2%	\$47,469	\$18.30
Hawaii	131,896	10%	39,214.00	14%	1%	\$63,741	\$1.20
Idaho	217,528	14%	76,630.00	19%	0%	\$44,644	\$2.20
Illinois	1,671,343	13%	586,040.00	19%	3%	\$53,974	\$20.40
Indiana	895,619	14%	310,140.00	20%	3%	\$45,427	\$10.40
Iowa	342,309	12%	109,384.00	16%	2%	\$48,065	\$3.60
Kansas	359,692	13%	118,187.00	17%	3%	\$47,709	\$4.00
Kentucky	771,876	18%	251,684.00	25%	4%	\$40,061	\$8.40
Louisiana	769,001	18%	274,805.00	25%	-4%	\$42,460	\$11.20
Maine	161,504	13%	46,349.00	18%	0%	\$45,708	\$1.80
Maryland	509,141	9%	157,164.00	12%	1%	\$69,193	\$4.90
Massachusetts	658,497	10%	187,931.00	13%	-1%	\$64,057	\$6.70
Michigan	1,565,559	16%	513,550.00	22%	4%	\$45,254	\$16.70
Minnesota	558,118	11%	172,134.00	14%	2%	\$55,621	\$5.70
Mississippi	620,446	22%	230,409.00	31%	0%	\$36,764	\$8.30
Missouri	850,316	15%	291,359.00	21%	2%	\$45,149	\$9.80
Montana	142,257	15%	44,840.00	21%	1%	\$42,222	\$1.40
Nebraska	212,312	12%	67,346.00	15%	0%	\$47,470	\$2.40
Nevada	323,738	12%	117,742.00	18%	3%	\$53,310	\$3.30
New Hampshire	110,769	9%	31,278.00	11%	2%	\$60,734	\$1.10
New Jersey	798,258	9%	269,659.00	13%	1%	\$68,444	\$9.20
New Mexico	359,030	18%	129,552.00	26%	-1%	\$42,830	\$4.80
New York	2,708,119	14%	878,114.00	20%	1%	\$54,554	\$33.40
North Carolina	1,475,063	16%	503,713.00	23%	2%	\$43,754	\$16.10
North Dakota	72,911	12%	20,022.00	14%	0%	\$47,898	\$0.70
Ohio	1,699,288	15%	577,026.00	22%	3%	\$45,467	\$19.20
Oklahoma	575,711	16%	199,277.00	22%	-1%	\$41,716	\$8.00
Oregon	536,813	14%	166,073.00	19%	1%	\$48,325	\$5.30
Pennsylvania	1,517,347	13%	466,423.00	17%	0%	\$49,501	\$17.50
Rhode Island	122,379	12%	39,988.00	18%	-2%	\$53,243	\$1.30
South Carolina	753,286	17%	258,848.00	24%	1%	\$42,580	\$8.50
South Dakota	110,863	14%	36,884.00	19%	1%	\$45,048	\$1.20
Tennessee	1,055,635	17%	352,943.00	24%	3%	\$41,715	\$12.10
Texas	4,143,077	17%	1,655,085.00	24%	-1%	\$48,286	\$57.50
Utah	321,441	12%	110,852.00	13%	1%	\$55,183	\$3.50
Vermont	69,137	12%	17,371.00	14%	-2%	\$51,219	\$0.60
Virginia	805,555	11%	255,156.00	14%	1%	\$59,372	\$8.10
Washington	803,266	12%	249,767.00	16%	1%	\$56,479	\$8.70
West Virginia	316,155	18%	91,059.00	24%	-2%	\$37,423	\$3.60
Wisconsin	682,973	12%	215,052.00	17%	3%	\$49,994	\$7.20
Wyoming	53,974	10%	17,176.00	13%	2%	\$54,400	\$0.50

<sup>1</sup>The National Center for Children in Poverty. "Who Are America's Poor Children?"

[http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub\\_1001.html#1](http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub_1001.html#1)

<sup>2</sup>The Population Reference Bureau. "State-by-State Costs of Childhood Poverty in the U.S."

<http://www.prb.org/Articles/2008/childpovertyestimates.aspx>

<sup>3</sup>The National Center for Children in Poverty. "Promoting Effective Early Learning."

[http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub\\_695.html#2](http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub_695.html#2)

<sup>4</sup>The National Poverty Center. "The Economic Costs of Poverty in the United States: Subsequent Effects of Children Growing Up Poor." [http://npc.umich.edu/publications/u/working\\_paper07-04.pdf](http://npc.umich.edu/publications/u/working_paper07-04.pdf)

<sup>5</sup>U.S. Census Bureau. "Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates for 2009." <http://www.census.gov/did/www/saipa/data/statecounty/data/2009.html>

<sup>6</sup>Author's calculations using U.S. Census Bureau Estimates

<sup>7</sup>Lori Pflingst. "The Cost of Child Poverty State by State." Washington Kids Count, [http://www.2020wi.org/pdf/poverty\\_statecosts.pdf](http://www.2020wi.org/pdf/poverty_statecosts.pdf)

