



Rate of Children in Low-Income Families Varies Widely by State¹

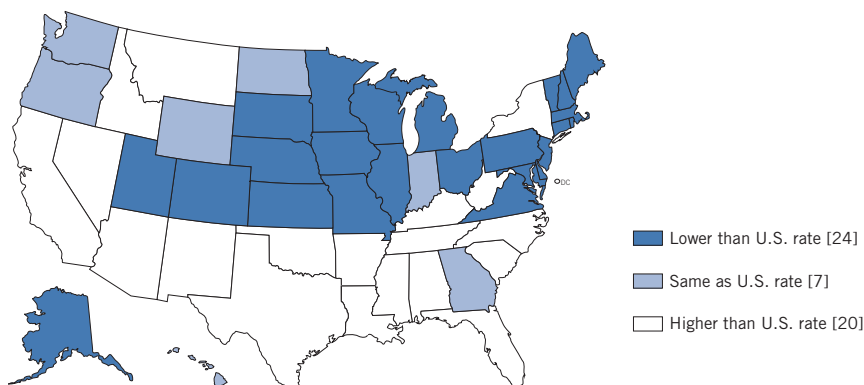
(SEPTEMBER 2004)

While nearly 40 percent of America's children live in low-income families,² they face very different demographic conditions depending on the state in which they live. State characteristics, including education levels, family structure, and immigration, contribute to differences in low-income rates among the states.

Southern States Home to More Low-Income Children

The low-income rate in some states is more than double the rate in others. For example, the state with the lowest percent of children living in low-income families is Maryland at 20 percent, while the state with the highest percent is Arkansas at 53 percent (see Table). Primarily, children in low-income families live in southeastern and southwestern states (see Map 1).

Map 1: Children in low-income families



The map shows differences between states and the U.S. rate that are statistically significant at the .10 level.

Young children—under age 6—are more likely to live in low-income families than older children. Across the United States, 41 percent of young children live in low-income families. The low-income rates for young children follow a similar pattern across states as those for children of all ages.³ For example, only 21 percent of younger children in Maryland live in low-income families, compared to 60 percent in Arkansas (see Table).

¹ Estimates in this fact sheet were prepared by Heather Koball and Ayana Douglas-Hall of NCCP based on the U.S. Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Supplement for March 2001-2003; final figures represent the average data over calendar years 2000, 2001, and 2002.

² Low-income is defined as income below twice the poverty level, which research suggests is the minimum necessary to meet basic needs. The federal poverty level was \$18,850 for a family of four in 2004.

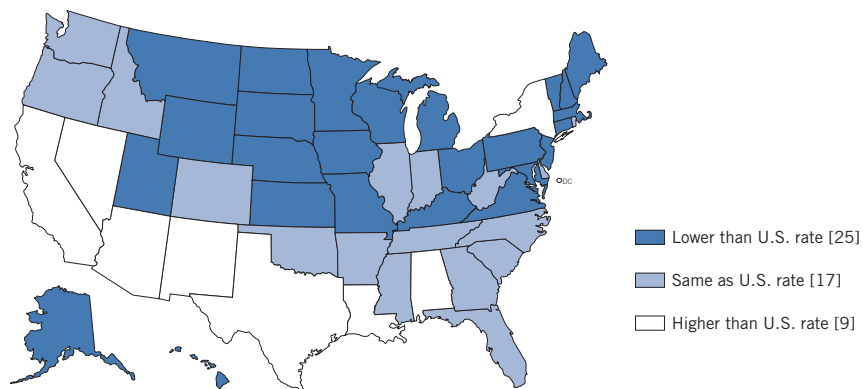
³ Like children of all ages, young children in low-income families tend to live in the southeastern and southwestern states.

Lack of Education

Low education levels of parents is an important contributor to low family income. Nationally, over 80 percent of families headed by a parent who lacks a high school degree are low-income, compared to 54 percent of families headed by a high school graduate, and just 22 percent of families headed by a parent who received at least some college education.⁴

The tremendous variation across states in parent education levels may be contributing to the differences in low-income rates among children. In California, one out of every five children lives with parents who do not hold a high school degree, while in Minnesota just 3 percent of children do (see Table). Parents with low education levels tend to live in the southwestern states, while parents with more education tend to live in north central and northeastern states (see Map 2).

Map 2: Children whose parents do not have a high school degree

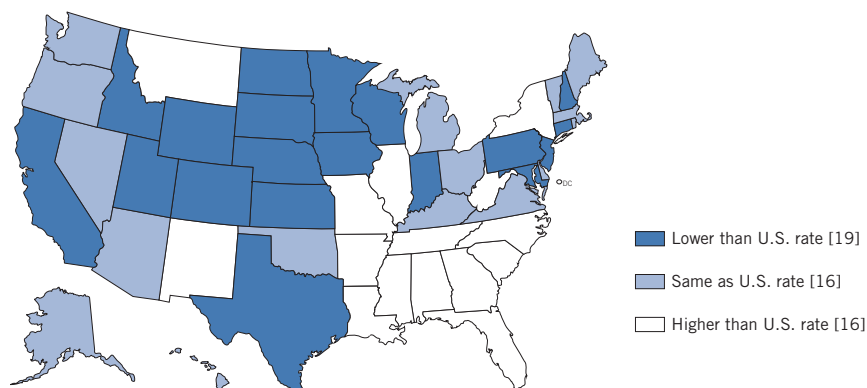


The map shows differences between states and the U.S. rate that are statistically significant at the .10 level.

Single-Parent Families

Single-parent families are more than twice as likely to be low-income as two-parent families. Across the United States, 59 percent of single-parent families are low-income compared to just 23 percent of two-parent families. Children who live in southeastern states are more likely to live with single parents than children in other parts of the country (see Map 3). Louisiana has the highest proportion of children living in single-parent families at 38 percent (the District of Columbia is higher at 57 percent), and Utah has the lowest percent at 15 percent (see Table).

Map 3: Children in single-parent families



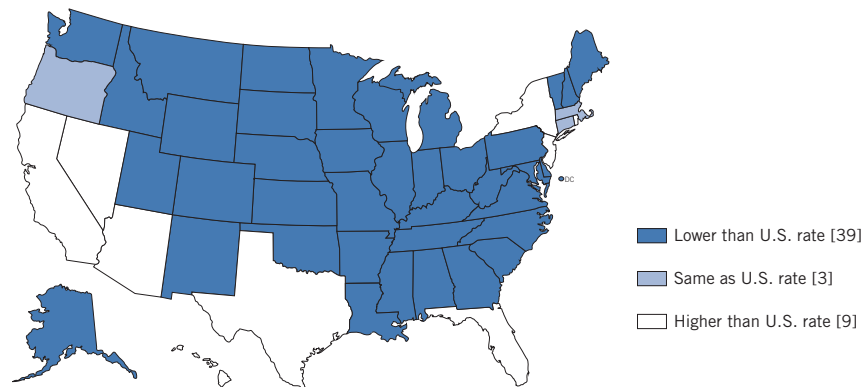
The map shows differences between states and the U.S. rate that are statistically significant at the .10 level.

⁴ Koball, H. & Douglas-Hall, A. (2004). *The effects of parent education on income*. New York, NY: National Center for Children in Poverty, Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health <www.nccp.org>.

Immigrant Families

Children whose parents are immigrants are more likely to be low-income than children who have U.S.-born parents.⁵ Immigration has been growing across the United States,⁶ however, the majority of immigrants live in a few key states (see Map 4). Nationally, 16 percent of children have two immigrant parents. The states with the most children born to two immigrant parents include California at 40 percent, New York at 27 percent, Florida at 23 percent, and Texas at 22 percent. Much of the remainder of the United States is home to very few children of immigrants. For example, only 1 percent of the children living in Maine, West Virginia, and Montana have two immigrant parents (see Table).

Map 4: Children with immigrant parents



The map shows differences between states and the U.S. rate that are statistically significant at the .10 level.

⁵ Koball, H. & Douglas-Hall, A. (2004). *Where do children in low-income families live?* New York, NY: National Center for Children in Poverty, Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health <www.nccp.org>.

⁶ Fix, M. & Passel, J. S. (2003). *U.S. immigration—Trends and implications for schools*. Paper presented at the National Association for Bilingual Education, NCLB Implementation Institute, January 28-29. Washington, DC: Urban Institute <www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/410654_NABEPresentation.pdf>.

	Percent of children in low-income families (<200% FPL)	Percent of young children in low-income families (<200% FPL)	Percent of all children who have parents without a high school degree	Percent of all children who live with a single parent	Percent of all children who have two immigrant parents
NATIONAL	37%	41%	11%	27%	16%
ALABAMA	43%	49%	13%	36%	2%
ALASKA	30%	36%	6%	26%	9%
ARIZONA	44%	47%	18%	29%	22%
ARKANSAS	53%	60%	11%	30%	4%
CALIFORNIA	42%	43%	22%	25%	40%
COLORADO	29%	31%	11%	21%	14%
CONNECTICUT	24%	26%	5%	24%	14%
DELAWARE	30%	39%	10%	28%	8%
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	49%	47%	21%	57%	11%
FLORIDA	41%	43%	11%	30%	23%
GEORGIA	39%	40%	11%	30%	8%
HAWAII	35%	40%	6%	27%	20%
IDAHO	41%	50%	11%	22%	9%
ILLINOIS	35%	37%	11%	28%	14%
INDIANA	36%	42%	10%	24%	3%
IOWA	30%	33%	7%	20%	7%
KANSAS	34%	40%	6%	24%	7%
KENTUCKY	40%	47%	9%	26%	3%
LOUISIANA	49%	56%	13%	38%	3%
MAINE	35%	40%	4%	26%	1%
MARYLAND	20%	21%	6%	25%	13%
MASSACHUSETTS	31%	31%	9%	27%	17%
MICHIGAN	31%	36%	7%	27%	8%
MINNESOTA	24%	24%	3%	19%	6%
MISSISSIPPI	49%	52%	9%	35%	2%
MISSOURI	30%	35%	6%	29%	3%
MONTANA	45%	57%	5%	31%	1%
NEBRASKA	33%	36%	6%	23%	5%
NEVADA	39%	41%	16%	28%	25%
NEW HAMPSHIRE	23%	26%	4%	24%	5%
NEW JERSEY	25%	26%	7%	22%	22%
NEW MEXICO	51%	55%	16%	34%	11%
NEW YORK	39%	39%	12%	29%	27%
NORTH CAROLINA	40%	46%	11%	29%	7%
NORTH DAKOTA	39%	48%	4%	22%	2%
OHIO	33%	35%	7%	28%	3%
OKLAHOMA	48%	57%	11%	28%	6%
OREGON	37%	43%	11%	26%	15%
PENNSYLVANIA	32%	34%	9%	24%	6%
RHODE ISLAND	28%	32%	9%	28%	19%
SOUTH CAROLINA	39%	44%	9%	32%	4%
SOUTH DAKOTA	32%	33%	4%	22%	2%
TENNESSEE	41%	45%	11%	32%	4%
TEXAS	46%	51%	22%	25%	22%
UTAH	34%	41%	6%	15%	10%
VERMONT	35%	40%	7%	27%	3%
VIRGINIA	26%	31%	7%	27%	10%
WASHINGTON	35%	42%	9%	28%	11%
WEST VIRGINIA	49%	59%	11%	31%	1%
WISCONSIN	30%	35%	8%	25%	5%
WYOMING	37%	43%	5%	24%	3%