



# Basic Facts About Low-Income Children

## *Birth to Age 6*

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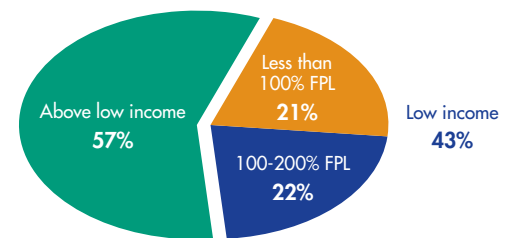
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### How many young children in the United States live in low-income families?

There are more than 24 million children under age 6 in the United States.

- ▶ 43% – 10.6 million – live in low-income families.
- ▶ 21% – 5.2 million – live in poor families.

**Children under age 6, by family income, 2007**



**National Center for Children in Poverty**

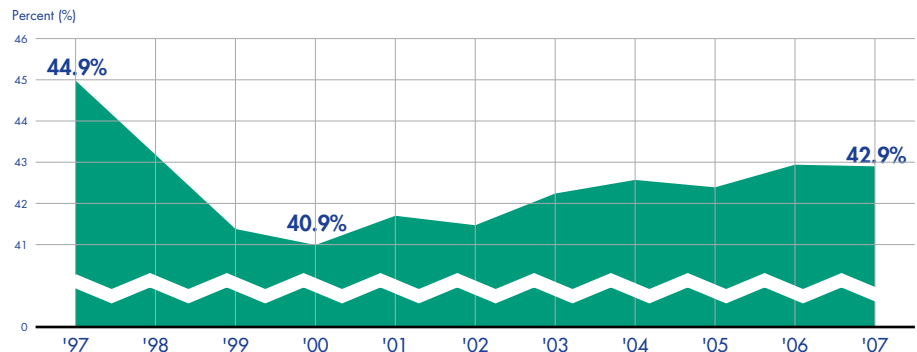
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### Have these numbers changed over time?

After a decade of decline, the proportion of young children living in low-income families is rising again, a trend that began in 2000. Between 2000 and 2007,

the number of children of all ages who were poor increased by 15%. During the same period, the number of children under age 6 who were poor increased by 24%.

**Children under age 6 living in low-income families, 1997-2007**



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### What is the federal poverty level (FPL) in 2008?<sup>1</sup>

- ▶ \$21,200 for a family of 4.
- ▶ \$17,600 for a family of 3.
- ▶ \$14,000 for a family of 2.

### Is a poverty-level income enough to support a family?

Research suggests that, on average, families need an income of at least twice the federal poverty level to meet their most basic needs.<sup>2</sup> Families with incomes below this level are referred to as low income:

- ▶ \$42,400 for a family of 4.
- ▶ \$35,200 for a family of 3.
- ▶ \$28,000 for a family of 2.

These figures approximate the average minimum income families need to make ends meet, but actual expenses vary greatly by locality. For a family of 4, the cost of basic family expenses is about \$40,000 per year in rural Chelan County, Washington, \$45,000 in Detroit, and \$51,000 in Houston.<sup>3</sup>

## What are the family characteristics of low-income young children?

### Parents' Employment

- ▶ 51% of children under age 6 in low-income families – 5.4 million – have at least one parent who works full-time, year-round.
- ▶ 29% of children under age 6 in low-income families – 3.1 million – have at least one parent who works part-time or full-time, part-year.
- ▶ 20% of children under age 6 in low-income families – 2.1 million – do not have an employed parent.

### Parents' Education

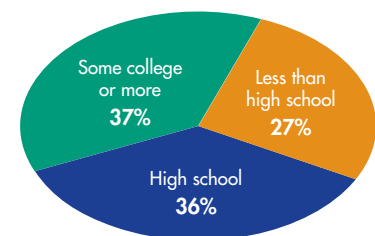
- ▶ 27% of children under age 6 in low-income families – 2.9 million – live with parents who have less than a high school education.
- ▶ 36% of children under age 6 in low-income families – 3.9 million – live with parents who have only a high school diploma.

- ▶ 37% of children under age 6 in low-income families – 3.9 million – live with parents who have some college or more.

### Family Structure

- ▶ 54% of children under age 6 in low-income families – 5.7 million – live with a single parent.
- ▶ 46% of children under age 6 in low-income families – 4.9 million – live with married parents.

Children under age 6 living in low-income families, by parent's education level, 2007



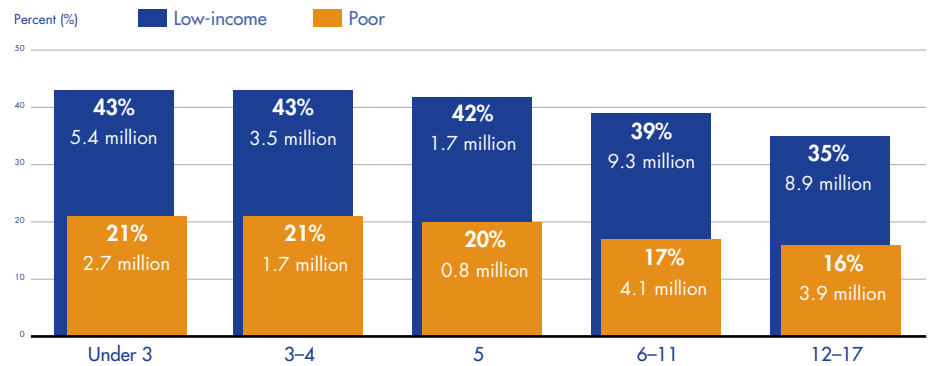
## Does the percent of children in low-income families vary by children's age?

Young children are disproportionately low income. 43% of children under age 6 – more than 10 million – live in low-income families.

- ▶ 43% of children under age 3 years – 5.4 million – live in low-income families.
- ▶ 43% of children ages 3 and 4 years – 3.5 million – live in low-income families.

- ▶ 42% of children age 5 years – 1.7 million – live in low-income families.
- ▶ 39% of children ages 6 through 11 years – 9.3 million – live in low-income families.
- ▶ 35% of children ages 12 through 17 years – 8.9 million – live in low-income families.

Children living in low-income and poor families, by age group, 2007

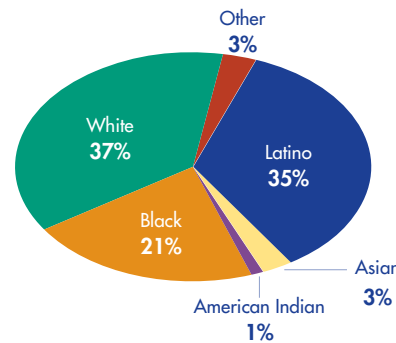


### Does the percent of young children in low-income families vary by race/ethnicity?

- ▶ 65% of American Indian children under age 6 – 0.1 million – live in low-income families.
- ▶ 64% of Latino children under age 6 – 3.8 million – live in low-income families.
- ▶ 64% of black children under age 6 – 2.3 million – live in low-income families.
- ▶ 26% of Asian children under age 6 – 0.3 million – live in low-income families.
- ▶ 29% of white children under age 6 – 3.9 million – live in low-income families.

Although American Indian, Latino, and black children are disproportionately low income, whites comprise the largest group of low-income children under age 6.

Children under age 6 living in low-income families, by race/ethnicity, 2007



### Does the percent of young children in low-income families vary by parents' country of birth?

- ▶ 61% of children under age 6 with immigrant parents – 2.7 million – live in low-income families.
- ▶ 40% of children under age 6 with native-born parents – 7.4 million – live in low-income families.

## Does the percent of young children in low-income families vary by where children under age 6 live?

### Region

- ▶ 47% of children under age 6 in the South – 4.4 million – live in low-income families.
- ▶ 43% of children under age 6 in the West – 2.6 million – live in low-income families.
- ▶ 35% of children under age 6 in the Northeast – 1.4 million – live in low-income families.
- ▶ 41% of children under age 6 in the Midwest – 2.3 million – live in low-income families.

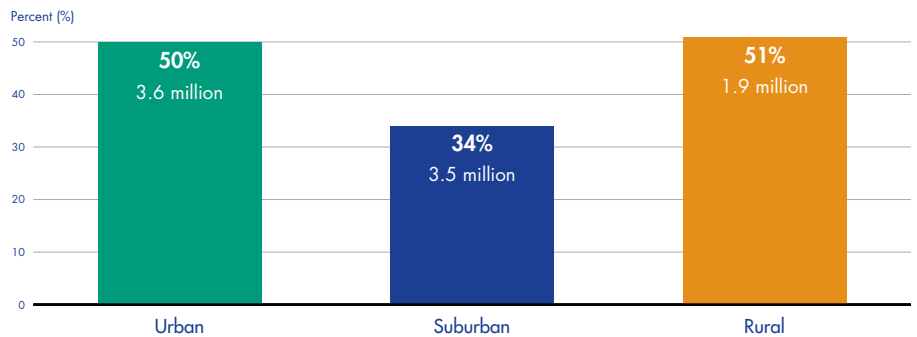
### Type of Area

- ▶ 50% of children under age 6 in urban areas – 3.6 million – live in low-income families.
- ▶ 34% of children under age 6 in suburban areas – 3.5 million – live in low-income families.
- ▶ 51% of children under age 6 in rural areas – 1.9 million – live in low-income families.

### Residential Instability

- ▶ 20% of children under age 6 in low-income families – 2.1 million – moved in the last year.
- ▶ 10% of children under age 6 in above low-income families – 1.4 million – moved last year.

**Children under age 6 living in low-income families, in urban, suburban, and rural areas, 2007**



## Endnotes

*Unless otherwise noted, data estimates were prepared by Ayana Douglas-Hall and Michelle Chau of NCCP based on the U.S. Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, March 2008, representing information for calendar year 2007. Estimates include children living in households with at least one parent and most children living apart from both parents (for example, children being raised by grandparents). Among children who do not live with at least one parent, parental characteristics are those of the householder and/or the householder's spouse.*

1. These numbers are from the federal poverty guidelines issued annually by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The demographic findings in this fact sheet were calculated using more complex versions of the federal poverty

measure – the thresholds issued by the U.S. Census Bureau. For more information on measuring poverty, see NCCP's state profiles and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services <[aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/08poverty.shtml](http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/08poverty.shtml)>.

2. Cauthen, Nancy K.; Fass, Sarah. 2008. *Measuring Income and Poverty in the United States*. New York, NY: National Center for Children in Poverty, Columbia University, Mailman School of Public Health.

3. NCCP's Basic Needs Budget Calculator <[www.nccp.org/tools/budget](http://www.nccp.org/tools/budget)>.

4. Approximately 0.5 million low-income children, ages birth to 6, live in households with one immigrant parent and one native-born parent. Those children are not counted in this figure.