National Center for Children in Poverty
Columbia University
MAILMAN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

EARLY CHILD HOOD POVERTY
RESEARCH BRIEF 1

Young Child Poverty in the States — Wide Variation and Significant Change

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Overview

The purpose of this research brief from the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) is to describe levels and trends of young child poverty in the states and to understand some of the important reasons behind the differences across the states. Key findings from the research brief include:

- Considerable variation exists among the states' young child poverty rates (YCPRs). In particular, seven states and the District of Columbia have rates significantly higher than the national average and 15 states have rates that are significantly lower. Young child poverty rates for 1992–1996 ranged from 11 percent in Utah to 41 percent in Louisiana.
- Ten states have experienced significant changes in their YCPRs between 1979–1983* and 1992–1996. Specifically, eight states' YCPRs increased, while the rates of two states decreased. Changes in state young child poverty rates ranged from a 53 percent increase in Oklahoma to a 39 percent fall in Vermont. Nationally, the young child poverty rate (YCPR) increased from 22.0 to 24.7 percent during the period covered by the study —an increase of 12 percent. The number of poor young children in the United States grew from an average of 4.4 million to an average of 5.9 million over the same period.
- California, New York, and Texas each experienced steep increases (24, 21, and 24 percent respectively) in their YCPRs between 1979–1983 and 1992–1996. These increases were significantly higher than the national increase of 12 percent. Indeed, more than half of the increase in the average number of poor young children in the United States over the period covered in this study can be attributed to these three states.
- Three demographic factors—changes in family structure, employment patterns, and educational attainment—accounted for a notable proportion of the changes in state young child poverty rates over the past two decades.

Introduction

With the passage of federal welfare reform in 1996 (The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act or PRA), accountability for the well-being of low-income families has shifted substantially from the federal government to the states. The legislation requires that each state provide an annual current estimate of its child poverty rate by May 31st, starting in 1998. If that rate exceeds the previous year's rate by more than 5 percent (e.g., from 20 percent to more than 21 percent), and this increase can be attributed to the effects of welfare reform, then the state must submit a corrective action plan. The logic of this requirement is clear: two-thirds of welfare recipients are children[1] and welfare reform cannot be deemed a success if it leads to higher child poverty rates.[2]

As of July 1998, the federal government is in the process of determining two critical methodologies: (1) how to estimate state-level poverty rates and (2) how to isolate the causes of poverty increases so that the conditions underlying the requirement for proposing a corrective action plan can, in fact, be met. With respect to the latter point, it is clear that if such a methodology is unavailable to the states, then it will be impossible to determine whether a corrective action plan is necessary. The federal government is months behind its anticipated schedule of developing the means necessary for the states to fulfill the obligations outlined for them in the welfare reform act.[3]

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* This research brief discusses young child poverty since 1979 because NCCP plans to use these statistics as a baseline for a future report that will use alternative measures of poverty—for which the necessary data only became available in 1979—to examine the effects of policy changes on young child poverty rates.

In the end, it may be that the major outcome of the reporting requirement will be simply to help shine a spotlight on the problem of child poverty in the United States: its level, trends over time, differences across states and various subgroups, and its causes and consequences.

This research brief focuses primarily on variation among the 50 states in young child poverty,[4] that is, poverty among children under age six. These young children have the highest poverty rates of any age group and are the most vulnerable to the impact of poverty. Preventing poverty in early childhood can reduce the incidence of several negative outcomes—e.g., costly medical problems, developmental delays, teen pregnancy, and adult unemployment—that are associated with young child poverty.[5] The report addresses three sets of questions:

- For the five-year period prior to the passage and implementation of the PRA, 1992 through 1996,[6] how much did states vary in their YCPRs?
- For the period from the late 1970s/early 1980s (1979–1983) through the early 1990s (1992–1996), how much did states vary in their rates of change in the YCPR?
- Are there key demographic factors that help to explain the differences among the states in the extent to which their YCPRs have changed?

As America enters a new era of increased state responsibility for children's well-being, this report provides baseline information on state child poverty rates to help establish a context in which individual state child poverty trends can be better understood.

State Rates of Poverty, Extreme Poverty, and Near Poverty Among Young Children

For the five-year period prior to the passage and implementation of the PRA, 1992 through 1996, how much did states vary in their YCPRs? Maps 1 through 3 display the poverty, extreme poverty, and near poverty rates of the states according to three categories—whether each state's rate was: (1) statistically similar to the national rate, (2) statistically significantly higher than the national rate, or (3) statistically significantly lower than the national rate. Actual estimates and their associated 90 percent confidence intervals are presented in Appendix Tables 1 through 3.[7]

Map 1 and Appendix Table 1 (Poverty rates of children under age six, by state, 1992–1996) reveal that the economic well-being of young children varied substantially across the United States. (The official poverty threshold in the United States in 1996 was $16,036 for a family of four.) The young child poverty rate ranged from under 12 percent in New Hampshire and Utah to 40 percent or more in Louisiana and West Virginia. The District of Columbia and seven states—the large states of California, New York, and Texas, plus Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, and West Virginia—had young child poverty rates that significantly exceeded the 1992–1996 national rate of 24.7 percent. Fifteen states had rates of poverty that were significantly lower than the national rate. These were distributed around the country and included large states like Pennsylvania and New Jersey and small states like Vermont and North Dakota.

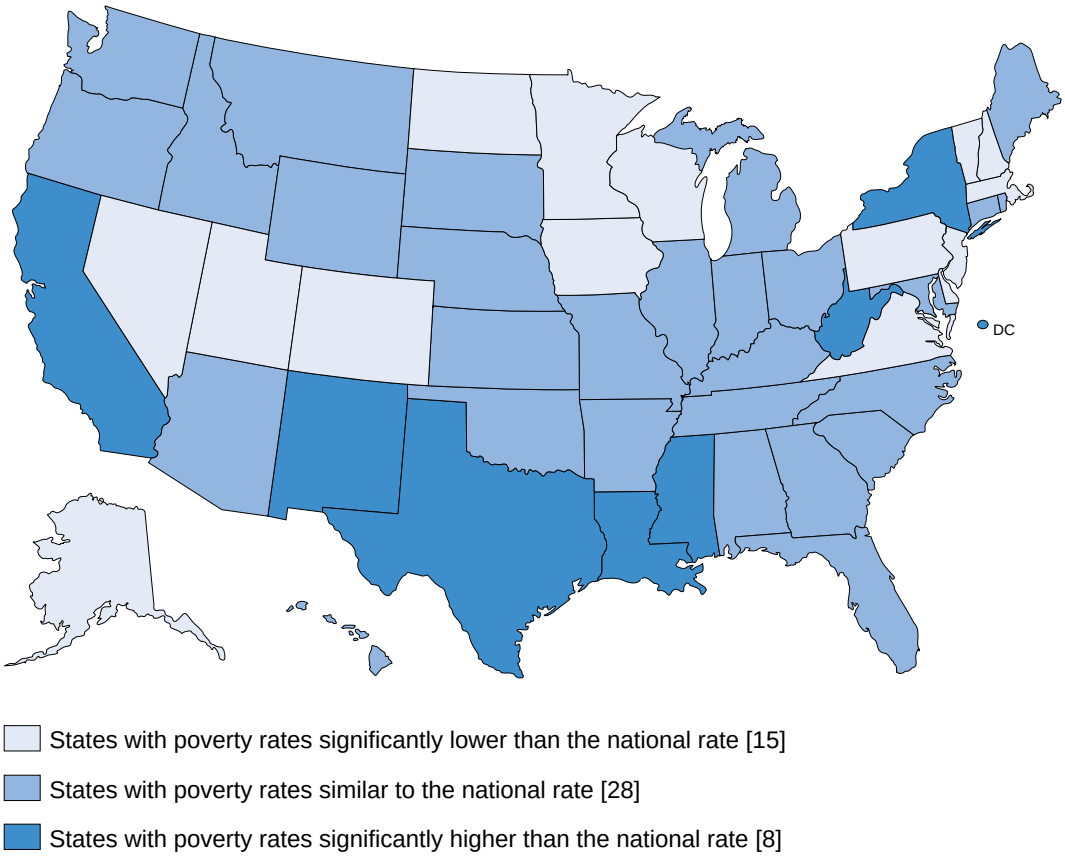
Map 2 and Appendix Table 2 (Extreme poverty rates of children under age six, by state, 1992–1996) show that extreme poverty (the proportion of young children in families with incomes of less than 50 percent of the poverty line) varied to an even greater extent across the states. Fewer than 3 percent of young children in Hawaii and Vermont found themselves in extreme poverty compared to more than 20 percent in Louisiana, Mississippi, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia. All together, eight states (the large states of Florida, New York, and Texas, in addition to New Mexico, Oklahoma, and the

latter group just mentioned) and the District of Columbia had extreme poverty rates that were significantly higher than the U.S. average of 11.7 percent. Fifteen states had rates that were significantly lower than the U.S. average.

Last, Map 3 and Appendix Table 3 (Near poverty rates of children under age six, by state, 1992–1996) reveal that the near poverty rate (the proportion of young children in families with incomes below 185 percent of the poverty line)* among young children ranged from less than 30 percent in Massachusetts and New Jersey to greater than 60 percent in Mississippi, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia. Twelve states had near poverty rates that were significantly lower than the national average of 44.2 percent, whereas 11 states—including California, Florida, and Texas—and the District of Columbia had rates that were significantly greater than the national rate.

MAP 1

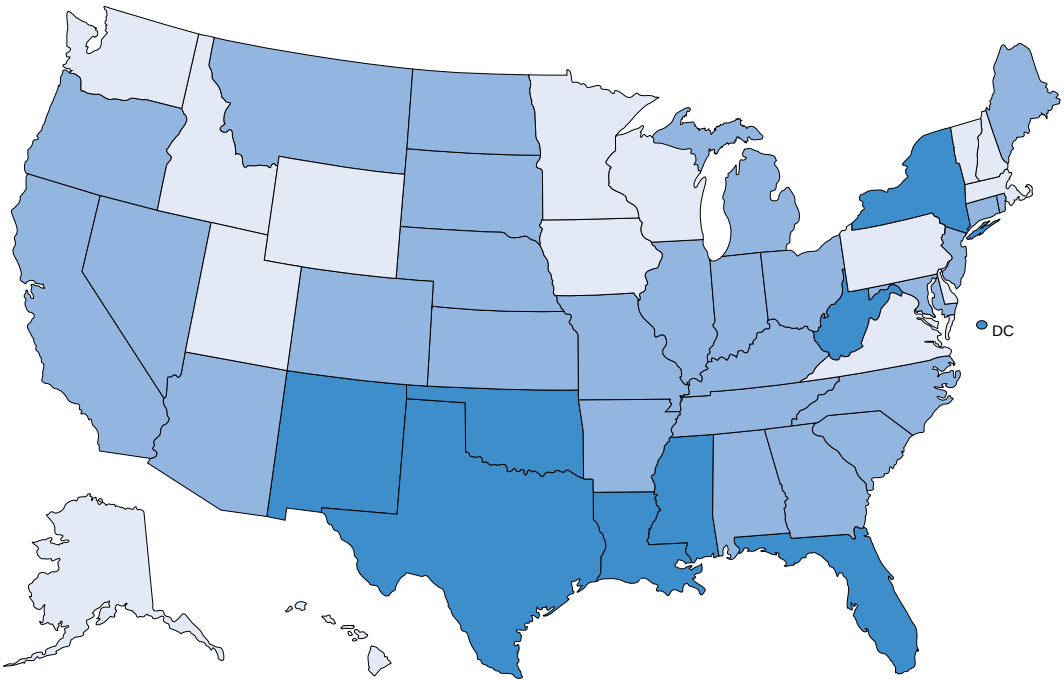
Poverty rates of children under age six, by state, 1992–1996



* Children in families with incomes between 100 and 185 percent of the federal poverty line are considered near poor because they are served by a number of government assistance programs for low-income people—such as Medicaid, the School Lunch and School Breakfast programs, and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)—that use 185 percent of the poverty line as the upper limit to determine eligibility.

MAP 2

Extreme poverty rates* of children under age six, by state, 1992–1996



States with extreme poverty rates significantly lower than the national rate [15]

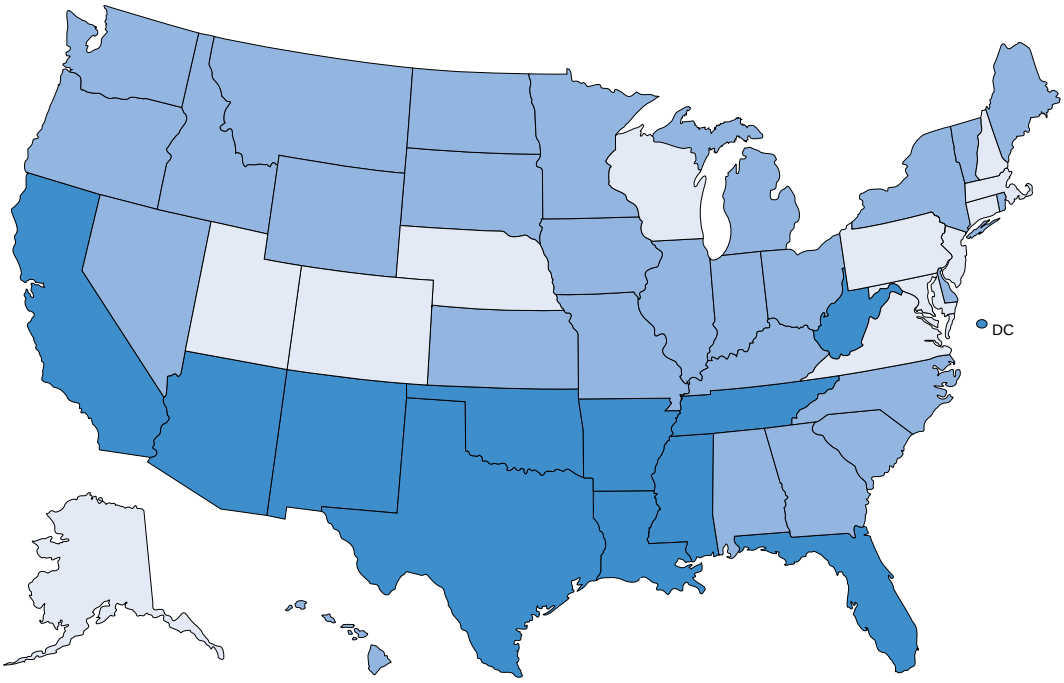
States with extreme poverty rates similar to the national rate [27]

States with extreme poverty rates significantly higher than the national rate [9]

* Children in families with incomes of less than 50 percent of the federal poverty line.

MAP 3

Near poverty rates* of children under age six, by state, 1992–1996



States with near poverty rates significantly lower than the national rate [12]

States with near poverty rates similar to the national rate [27]

States with near poverty rates significantly higher than the national rate [12]

* Children in families with incomes below 185 percent of the federal poverty line.

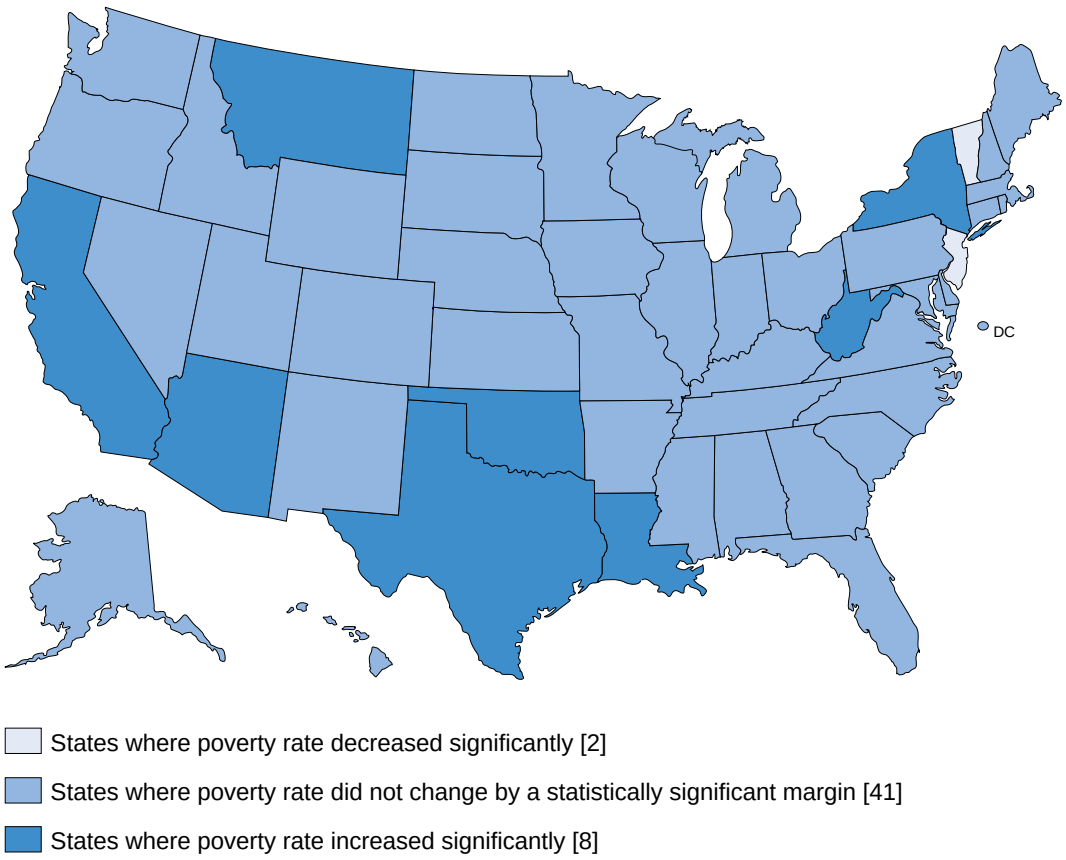
Changes in State Young Child Poverty Rates from 1979–1983 to 1992–1996

For the period from 1979–1983 through 1992–1996, how much did states vary in their rates of change in their YCPRs? Map 4 and Appendix Table 4 (Change in the percentage of children under age six in poverty, by state, 1979–1983 to 1992–1996) examine the levels of poverty in each of the two time periods and the percentage change that took place in each state. Here, too, there is abundant variation by state. Nationally, the YCPR climbed by 12 percent over the time period observed. The rate appeared to increase by over 20 percent in 15 states, including Connecticut (62 percent), Wyoming (55 percent), Oklahoma (53 percent), and Montana (51 percent). At the same time, the poverty rate decreased by more than 20 percent in five states: Alabama (-20 percent), Alaska (-23 percent), Delaware (-24 percent), New Jersey (-26 percent), and Vermont (-39 percent).

Ten states exhibit statistically significant changes in their YCPRs.[8] In particular, the YCPR increased significantly in eight states—the three largest states in the union, California, New York, and Texas, as well as West Virginia, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Montana, and Arizona (see Appendix Table 4). California, New York, and Texas each experienced disproportionately steep rises in their young child poverty rates over the past two decades (24, 21, and 24 percent respectively). Indeed, these three states accounted for 53 percent (nearly 800,000) of the total national increase of 1.5 million in the average number of poor young children. On the other hand, New Jersey and Vermont are the only states that experienced significant declines in their YCPRs between 1979–1983 and 1992–1996. The fact that only ten states showed statistically significant trends does not imply that other states' YCPRs did not change, even dramatically, over the time period observed. For many states the number of individuals interviewed was simply insufficient to draw such a conclusion.

MAP 4

Change in the percentage of children under age six in poverty, by state, 1979–1983 to 1992–1996



Why Do State Poverty Trends Differ?

Are there key demographic factors that help to explain the differences among the states in the extent to which their YCPRs changed? States differ considerably with respect to how they fared over the period 1979–1983 to 1992–1996. This variation may be caused by the possible differences among the states in the trends for a wide range of factors. On the basis of prior research,[9] NCCP focused on three of these variables which are potentially relevant to all of the states: the proportions of children with (1) single mothers (family structure), (2) mothers who completed high school (maternal education), and (3) at least one parent employed full time (parental employment). (See Appendix Table 5.)

Single Motherhood

The increase in the nationwide proportion of young children with single mothers was 25 percent since 1979–1983. However, the change varied from increases of more than three-quarters in New Mexico (99 percent), Kentucky (88 percent), Montana (84 percent), and Nebraska (77 percent), to decreases in the District of Columbia (-3 percent), and the three states of Maryland (-4 percent), Arkansas (-6 percent), and New Jersey (-15 percent).

Maternal Education

Similar variation existed across the states in the changes in the proportion of mothers who completed high school. The proportion increased nationally by 4 percent, but increases were much more pronounced in states such as Mississippi (17 percent; its percentage in 1979–1983 was the lowest among all states), Arkansas (16 percent), and Indiana (16 percent). The proportion actually decreased in the District of Columbia (-12 percent) and eight states, including Montana (-7 percent) and California (-6 percent).

Parental Employment

Although the employment scene generally improved for the nation over this time period, with a 3 percent increase in the proportion of young children with at least one parent employed full time, the situation differed dramatically among the states. The employment environment deteriorated in the District of Columbia (-18 percent) and many states, including New Hampshire (-14 percent) and Connecticut (-13 percent). At the opposite end of the spectrum, six states saw increases of 15 percent or more—Alaska (48 percent), Hawaii (21 percent), Arkansas (17 percent), Virginia (16 percent), Delaware (15 percent), and Washington (15 percent).

NCCP conducted a statistical analysis (details of which are available on request) to assess the degree to which these three factors explain the rise or fall of individual state poverty rates. Family structure, maternal education, and parental employment variables account for all of the change in the YCPR in seven states and none of the change in 12 states. The median percentage of the change in the YCPR that is explained by these variables is 30 percent. Thus, once again there is great variation among the states—this time not only in the magnitude of change that they had experienced in the YCPR, but in the degree to which the three factors drove these changes. A summary measure of the distribution across states of the explanatory power of these factors—the 30 percent median—indicates that these factors played an important role in state poverty trends. In many political and policy discussions, either the breakdown of the two-parent family *or* high school dropout rates *or* the lack of full-time employment is cited as the major cause of increases in young child poverty. This analysis suggests that all three factors combine to influence rates of states' growth in the YCPR and that policymakers would do well to monitor each of them closely.

Because this study found that more than half of the national increase in the average number of young children in poverty occurred in California, New York, and Texas, NCCP examined the impact of immigration on the increase in young child poverty in those states. Indeed, each of these states has a large and growing immigrant population. In preliminary analyses, NCCP finds that immigration trends constitute an important, though not exclusive factor in the growth of family poverty in California, New York, and Texas. NCCP is now embarking on further research to refine our understanding of immigration's place in the larger picture of the many elements that influence the economic well-being of children and families in the states.

The effects of additional factors on state YCPRs—especially economic and policy factors—remain to be explored. In collaboration with other researchers, NCCP plans to intensively examine these factors over the next year. These may include, for example, variables that describe a state's business climate, which surely has substantial effects on individual low-income families' economic well-being. A potential state policy variable would be the extent to which a state's child care policies help low-income parents gain access to affordable child care and enter the work force. NCCP will also use an alternative measure of poverty to determine the impact of state tax policies, particularly state earned income tax credits, which are currently available in only ten states.[10]

Conclusion

NCCP has sought in this research brief to describe current variation in young child poverty rates across the 50 states, as well as in the trends that have taken place over the period 1979–1996. This study has been motivated in part by the shift of responsibility for the well-being of low-income families from the federal to state governments.

The dramatic state variation in both the levels of the YCPR and their rates of growth over time underscores the wisdom of focusing on poverty at the state level. The analyses described here, however, highlight the technical difficulty in detecting annual changes of as little as 5 percent in the YCPR, given current data sources. Only ten states experienced statistically significant changes in their YCPRs as measured by the differences in two five-year averages separated by more than a decade.

The federal government has mandated a focus upon the difference in child poverty rates obtained by comparing consecutive years of data. The U.S. Bureau of the Census is currently engaged in work aimed towards decreasing the uncertainty surrounding poverty estimates by developing new methodologies and supplementing existing data from the Current Population Survey with new data from other sources. It will be difficult to fully judge the impact of welfare reform on children and families until such time as rigorous and sensitive means to detect annual changes in state poverty rates are devised.

The simple analyses presented in this research brief do not by any means yield a comprehensive knowledge of state variation in young child poverty. Yet it is NCCP's hope that this publication will focus greater attention on young child poverty within individual states and also help to encourage a "race to the top" among the states to find the most targeted and effective strategies to prevent young child poverty.

APPENDIX 1
The Interpretation of Confidence Intervals

The poverty rates in this publication were obtained from survey data collected from each state by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. In some instances, the state samples upon which the estimates are based are as small as a few hundred individuals. It is important to recognize the degree to which poverty estimates can fluctuate merely because of small sample sizes. A random sample of 300 people might yield one poverty rate; however, another sample of 300 might result in a rather different rate. The 90 percent confidence intervals shown in the tables detailing the poverty, extreme poverty, and near poverty rates of states reflect this variability. There is a 90 percent probability that the actual poverty rate falls within the upper and lower estimates indicated for each of the states. The precise poverty rates are unknown because the Census Bureau does not interview everyone but instead relies on samples that include only a fraction of the population.

The national young child poverty rate (YCPR) for 1992–1996 was 24.7 percent, with a 90 percent confidence interval of 23.9 to 25.4 percent. There are two reasons that a state would fall in the middle group of states, that is, with a rate that appears to be similar to the national rate: (1) The estimated rate for the state is very close to the national rate—North Carolina is an appropriate example of this, since its estimated rate is 24.6 percent; or (2) the estimated rate is quite low or high, but small sample sizes prevent concluding with certainty that the state rate truly differs from the national rate. Wyoming, which appears to have a relatively low YCPR, 19.4 percent, is a suitable example of this. Once again, there is fair uncertainty about pinpointing that rate due to the small sample size on which that estimated rate was based. In Wyoming's case (and that of other states with small populations), there is a wide confidence interval (in this case, between 12.7 and 26.0 percent). Because the national YCPR of 24.7 percent falls within the possible range for the YCPR of Wyoming, NCCP cannot say that Wyoming has a significantly lower YCPR than the nation as a whole. This is true for the large group of states shown in the middle of Appendix Tables 1 through 3 and Maps 1 through 3. Technically speaking, the uncertainty of the poverty estimates of the states comprising the middle group does not permit one to infer whether true differences exist between their rates and the national rate. None of them, then, has a YCPR that is statistically distinguishable from the national rate. The shorthand description of this concept that is invoked in the text, maps, and tables is simply that these rates are "similar" to the national rate.

On the other hand, the confidence intervals of the District of Columbia and the seven states at the bottom of Appendix Table 1 lie entirely above the national rate of 24.7 percent. Consequently, the District of Columbia and these seven states—California, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, New York, Texas, and West Virginia—have YCPRs that are significantly higher (in a statistical sense) than the national rate. In contrast, 15 states have YCPRs that are significantly lower than the national rate.

Last, it may be confusing to note that Hawaii, for example, appears to have a lower YCPR than, let's say, Pennsylvania, and yet Pennsylvania falls in the lowest category while Hawaii falls in the middle category. This is due to the fact that the larger sample size for Pennsylvania results in a much narrower confidence interval than the small sample size does for Hawaii. Thus, while the interval for Pennsylvania (15.2 percent to 21.5 percent) falls safely below the confidence interval associated with the national rate—23.9 percent to 25.4 percent—the interval for Hawaii does not.

APPENDIX 2
Discerning the Influence of Key Factors on Changes in State YCPRs

In order to ascertain the extent to which three factors—single motherhood, maternal education, and parental employment—explain changes in individual state poverty rates, two regression analyses were conducted for each state. The dependent variable in both regressions was whether a young child is in poverty.[11] The first regression simply included one independent variable, namely a dummy reflecting the time period 1992–1996. (The omitted variable, reflected in the constant term, referred to the time period 1979–1983.) Thus, the coefficient of the time dummy is identical to the change in the YCPR, positive or negative, that took place between 1979–1983 and 1992–1996.

The second regression added the three control variables to the model. The extent to which the coefficient of the time dummy moved toward zero is the amount of the change that can be attributed to the effects of the three control variables. If the coefficient moves to zero or switches signs, then it can be said that the three variables account for 100 percent of the change observed in the YCPR. In the latter instance, the poverty rate actually would have increased, for example, rather than decreased had it not been for the trends in the state's three factors. If the coefficient moves further away from zero, then it can be said that the factors account for none of the change in the YCPR, because the YCPR actually would have increased (or decreased) further had the observed trends in the three control variables not taken place.

Endnotes

1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. (1996). *Characteristics and financial circumstances of AFDC recipients: FY 1993.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

2. See Collins, A. & Aber, J. L. (1997). *How welfare reform can help or hurt children* (Children and Welfare Reform Issue Brief 1). New York, NY: National Center for Children in Poverty, Columbia School of Public Health.

3. On May 29th the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) issued a "Program Instruction" to all state agencies administering the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, informing them that the states need not submit their estimates of their child poverty rates for the time being. Rather, DHHS will send the states child poverty estimates as soon as the U.S. Bureau of the Census develops them. The particular methodology by which child poverty rates should be estimated and how the requirement for a corrective action plan will be carried out will be contained in a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, which is scheduled to be published in summer 1998.

4. State-specific estimates of young child poverty rates do not yet take into account differences in the cost of living by state. This data is simply not available and the differences are substantial. The federal government, for example, has determined that in 1996 the fair market rent including utilities for a two-bedroom apartment in Birmingham, Alabama was $447, while it was $817 in New York City. NCCP will address this issue in a subsequent work.

5. Duncan, G. J. & Brooks-Gunn, J. (Eds.). *Consequences of growing up poor.* New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

6. It is not possible at this time to study the impact of federal welfare reform, in the form of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, on young child poverty because the reform was implemented only in late 1996. For a brief discussion of the possible impact of state-initiated welfare changes on the YCPR, see p. 12 of: Li, J. & Bennett, N. (1998). *Young children in poverty: A statistical update, March 1998 Edition.* New York, NY: National Center for Children in Poverty, Columbia School of Public Health. Data for 1997 will be available fall 1998.

7. All poverty estimates are based on data from the March Current Population Surveys (CPS), conducted annually by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. The CPS is a nationally representative survey of approximately 50,000 households. For an in-depth discussion of the interpretation of confidence intervals, see Appendix 1.

8. Statistical significance is measured at the .10 level. Thus, for each of these ten states there is a 90 percent probability that the actual change in the YCPR is different from zero. The precise changes in poverty rates are unknown because the Census Bureau does not interview everyone in a given state for a particular time period, but instead relies on samples that include only a fraction of the population.

9. See, for example, Li & Bennett in endnote 6 and National Center for Children in Poverty. (1996). *One in four: America's youngest poor.* New York, NY: National Center for Children in Poverty, Columbia School of Public Health.

10. The ten states that supplement the federal EITC program with their own are Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Wisconsin.

11. Typically, one does not apply ordinary least squares regression analysis when the dependent variable is dichotomous. Here it is done for ease of explication. Logistic regression analyses yield findings that are consistent with those that are described.

APPENDIX TABLE 1

Poverty rates of children under age six, by state, 1992–1996

	Poverty rate (%)	Number of children		Confidence interval (90%)	
		In poverty	Total	Lower	Upper
USA	**24.7**	**5,877,088**	**23,827,204**	**23.9**	**25.4**
States with poverty rates significantly lower than the national rate					
Alaska	13.8	8,749	63,469	9.5	18.0
Colorado	17.2	55,659	323,119	11.6	22.9
Delaware	15.3	8,750	57,297	9.3	21.3
Iowa	17.1	45,228	264,617	11.8	22.4
Massachusetts	16.6	84,557	507,916	13.3	20.0
Minnesota	17.2	68,142	396,345	11.6	22.8
Nevada	16.6	20,938	125,914	11.1	22.1
New Hampshire	11.9	12,236	103,215	6.5	17.2
New Jersey	15.4	107,412	698,922	12.4	18.4
North Dakota	17.3	8,614	49,905	11.6	23.0
Pennsylvania	18.4	179,569	976,732	15.2	21.5
Utah	11.4	26,338	231,845	7.6	15.1
Vermont	13.3	7,521	56,502	8.0	18.6
Virginia	17.4	92,544	530,930	12.2	22.6
Wisconsin	16.2	73,080	452,219	11.1	21.2
States with poverty rates similar to the national rate					
Alabama	25.9	100,936	390,292	19.7	32.1
Arizona	28.9	124,350	430,433	23.0	34.8
Arkansas	27.0	59,990	222,046	20.7	33.3
Connecticut	24.0	67,250	280,726	16.7	31.2
Florida	26.6	313,231	1,179,706	23.3	29.8
Georgia	23.7	152,241	641,174	18.0	29.5
Hawaii	18.3	19,015	103,648	12.3	24.4
Idaho	21.7	22,397	103,016	16.2	27.3
Illinois	24.3	271,890	1,120,426	20.9	27.6
Indiana	21.5	118,010	549,748	15.6	27.3
Kansas	20.2	50,245	248,334	14.8	25.7
Kentucky	29.4	90,042	306,544	22.4	36.3
Maine	22.4	19,567	87,170	15.2	29.6
Maryland	18.6	94,425	508,369	13.0	24.1
Michigan	25.7	225,756	876,795	22.2	29.2
Missouri	23.9	102,202	426,772	17.2	30.7
Montana	25.9	20,019	77,160	19.8	32.1
Nebraska	18.7	29,478	157,568	13.4	24.0
North Carolina	24.6	144,267	586,772	20.8	28.4
Ohio	23.1	223,470	969,149	19.7	26.5
Oklahoma	32.0	92,384	288,395	25.4	38.7
Oregon	20.1	51,635	256,487	13.7	26.5
Rhode Island	20.4	15,266	74,879	13.2	27.5
South Carolina	24.0	74,702	311,445	18.0	30.0
South Dakota	21.9	13,437	61,295	16.2	27.6
Tennessee	27.8	123,466	443,652	21.4	34.3
Washington	18.4	89,168	483,589	12.9	24.0
Wyoming	19.4	7,710	39,788	12.7	26.0
States with poverty rates significantly higher than the national rate					
California	29.0	950,269	3,280,728	26.6	31.3
District of Columbia	44.2	23,424	53,032	35.9	52.4
Louisiana	40.6	158,447	389,800	33.5	47.8
Mississippi	35.5	86,319	243,200	28.9	42.1
New Mexico	34.0	58,049	170,793	27.8	40.1
New York	28.8	464,551	1,615,424	26.0	31.5
Texas	30.3	572,180	1,889,967	27.1	33.4
West Virginia	40.0	47,963	119,935	31.8	48.2

APPENDIX TABLE 2

Extreme poverty rates of children under age six, by state, 1992–1996

	Extreme poverty rate (%)	Number of children		Confidence interval (90%)	
		In poverty	Total	Lower	Upper
USA	**11.7**	**2,785,214**	**23,827,204**	**11.1**	**12.2**
States with extreme poverty rates significantly lower than the national rate					
Alaska	3.5	2,225	63,469	1.2	5.8
Delaware	5.4	3,067	57,297	1.6	9.1
Hawaii	2.7	2,766	103,648	0.2	5.2
Idaho	7.5	7,732	103,016	4.0	11.0
Iowa	6.9	18,206	264,617	3.3	10.4
Massachusetts	7.9	39,908	507,916	5.4	10.3
Minnesota	4.6	18,361	396,345	1.5	7.8
New Hampshire	6.1	6,260	103,215	2.1	10.0
Pennsylvania	8.6	84,434	976,732	6.4	10.9
Utah	3.4	7,931	231,845	1.3	5.6
Vermont	2.7	1,549	56,502	0.2	5.3
Virginia	6.8	36,291	530,930	3.4	10.3
Washington	4.9	23,571	483,589	1.8	8.0
Wisconsin	5.4	24,339	452,219	2.3	8.5
Wyoming	6.7	2,657	39,788	2.5	10.9
States with extreme poverty rates similar to the national rate					
Alabama	14.7	57,434	390,292	9.7	19.7
Arizona	12.9	55,336	430,433	8.5	17.2
Arkansas	12.2	27,178	222,046	7.6	16.9
California	9.7	319,344	3,280,728	8.2	11.3
Colorado	8.6	27,709	323,119	4.4	12.8
Connecticut	8.3	23,304	280,726	3.6	13.0
Georgia	13.8	88,551	641,174	9.1	18.5
Illinois	13.6	152,502	1,120,426	11.0	16.3
Indiana	8.7	47,917	549,748	4.7	12.8
Kansas	7.9	19,515	248,334	4.2	11.5
Kentucky	16.3	49,990	306,544	10.7	22.0
Maine	9.4	8,184	87,170	4.4	14.4
Maryland	9.1	46,439	508,369	5.0	13.3
Michigan	14.6	127,917	876,795	11.8	17.4
Missouri	11.1	47,284	426,772	6.1	16.0
Montana	10.1	7,802	77,160	5.9	14.3
Nebraska	8.8	13,864	157,568	4.9	12.7
Nevada	9.4	11,800	125,914	5.1	13.7
New Jersey	8.9	62,524	698,922	6.6	11.3
North Carolina	11.9	69,595	586,772	9.0	14.7
North Dakota	8.3	4,162	49,905	4.2	12.5
Ohio	12.5	121,264	969,149	9.8	15.2
Oregon	8.2	20,918	256,487	3.8	12.5
Rhode Island	8.6	6,431	74,879	3.6	13.6
South Carolina	13.0	40,624	311,445	8.3	17.8
South Dakota	13.1	8,035	61,295	8.5	17.7
Tennessee	14.9	66,020	443,652	9.8	20.0
States with extreme poverty rates significantly higher than the national rate					
District of Columbia	26.3	13,928	53,032	19.0	33.6
Florida	15.3	180,698	1,179,706	12.6	18.0
Louisiana	24.3	94,631	389,800	18.0	30.5
Mississippi	23.1	56,134	243,200	17.3	28.9
New Mexico	18.3	31,193	170,793	13.2	23.3
New York	14.8	239,037	1,615,424	12.7	16.9
Oklahoma	18.4	53,005	288,395	12.9	23.9
Texas	14.8	279,260	1,889,967	12.4	17.2
West Virginia	22.0	26,388	119,935	15.1	28.9

APPENDIX TABLE 3

Near poverty rates of children under age six, by state, 1992–1996

	Near poverty rate (%)	Number of children		Confidence interval (90%)	
		In poverty	Total	Lower	Upper
USA	**44.2**	**10,531,506**	**23,827,204**	**43.3**	**45.1**
States with near poverty rates significantly lower than the national rate					
Alaska	31.7	20,094	63,469	25.9	37.4
Colorado	35.4	114,407	323,119	28.3	42.5
Connecticut	32.6	91,641	280,726	24.7	40.6
Maryland	35.2	178,970	508,369	28.4	42.0
Massachusetts	29.9	152,034	507,916	25.8	34.1
Nebraska	35.7	56,225	157,568	29.2	42.2
New Hampshire	30.0	30,931	103,215	22.4	37.6
New Jersey	27.7	193,577	698,922	24.0	31.4
Pennsylvania	35.7	348,638	976,732	31.8	39.6
Utah	35.4	82,120	231,845	29.8	41.0
Virginia	33.2	176,406	530,930	26.8	39.7
Wisconsin	30.4	137,598	452,219	24.1	36.8
States with near poverty rates similar to the national rate					
Alabama	45.7	178,465	390,292	38.7	52.8
Delaware	39.0	22,336	57,297	30.8	47.1
Georgia	43.8	280,893	641,174	37.1	50.5
Hawaii	39.5	40,906	103,648	31.9	47.1
Idaho	51.5	53,060	103,016	44.8	58.2
Illinois	40.3	451,858	1,120,426	36.5	44.1
Indiana	43.3	238,167	549,748	36.2	50.4
Iowa	40.9	108,117	264,617	33.9	47.8
Kansas	41.1	101,976	248,334	34.4	47.8
Kentucky	47.8	146,449	306,544	40.1	55.4
Maine	40.9	35,659	87,170	32.4	49.4
Michigan	41.8	366,764	876,795	37.9	45.8
Minnesota	36.6	145,003	396,345	29.4	43.8
Missouri	50.5	215,685	426,772	42.6	58.4
Montana	52.0	40,130	77,160	45.0	59.0
Nevada	38.2	48,046	125,914	31.0	45.3
New York	46.1	744,077	1,615,424	43.1	49.1
North Carolina	44.7	262,040	586,772	40.3	49.0
North Dakota	38.1	19,010	49,905	30.8	45.4
Ohio	42.6	413,097	969,149	38.6	46.6
Oregon	47.8	122,702	256,487	39.9	55.8
Rhode Island	37.9	28,400	74,879	29.3	46.5
South Carolina	50.7	157,920	311,445	43.6	57.8
South Dakota	43.7	26,764	61,295	36.9	50.5
Vermont	38.0	21,466	56,502	30.4	45.5
Washington	38.5	186,125	483,589	31.5	45.5
Wyoming	45.1	17,941	39,788	36.7	53.5
States with near poverty rates significantly higher than the national rate					
Arizona	53.1	228,665	430,433	46.6	59.6
Arkansas	56.2	124,737	222,046	49.1	63.2
California	48.9	1,603,205	3,280,728	46.3	51.5
District of Columbia	63.4	33,598	53,032	55.4	71.4
Florida	49.0	578,378	1,179,706	45.3	52.7
Louisiana	55.3	215,659	389,800	48.1	62.6
Mississippi	61.5	149,620	243,200	54.8	68.2
New Mexico	58.8	100,458	170,793	52.4	65.2
Oklahoma	53.4	153,902	288,395	46.3	60.5
Tennessee	54.2	240,357	443,652	47.0	61.4
Texas	51.5	973,683	1,889,967	48.1	54.9
West Virginia	61.3	73,547	119,935	53.2	69.5

APPENDIX TABLE 4

Change in the percentage and number of children under age six in poverty, by state, 1979–1983 to 1992–1996

	1979–1983		1992–1996		% Change	Change in
	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	in rate	number
USA	**22.04**	**4,420,791**	**24.67**	**5,877,075**	**12**	**1,456,284**
Connecticut	14.75	30,440	23.96	67,250	62	36,810
Wyoming	12.50	6,075	19.38	7,710	55	1,635
Oklahoma	***20.94***	***54,643***	***32.03***	***92,384***	***53***	***37,741***
Montana	***17.22***	***14,626***	***25.95***	***20,019***	***51***	***5,393***
Arizona	***19.76***	***49,025***	***28.89***	***124,350***	***46***	***75,325***
West Virginia	***27.65***	***48,739***	***39.99***	***47,962***	***45***	***-777***
Louisiana	***29.14***	***133,557***	***40.65***	***158,447***	***40***	***24,890***
Kentucky	21.37	73,950	29.37	90,042	37	16,092
District of Columbia	33.09	13,791	44.17	23,424	33	9,632
Maryland	13.94	40,545	18.57	94,425	33	53,879
Texas	***24.39***	***358,482***	***30.27***	***572,180***	***24***	***213,698***
California	***23.40***	***516,759***	***28.97***	***950,269***	***24***	***433,510***
Missouri	19.38	81,911	23.95	102,202	24	20,291
New York	***23.75***	***338,754***	***28.76***	***464,551***	***21***	***125,797***
Minnesota	14.30	55,640	17.19	68,142	20	12,503
Ohio	19.55	188,078	23.06	223,470	18	35,392
New Mexico	28.82	39,598	33.99	58,049	18	18,450
North Carolina	20.90	94,869	24.59	144,267	18	49,398
Nevada	14.22	10,790	16.63	20,938	17	10,148
North Dakota	14.79	9,744	17.26	8,613	17	-1,131
Michigan	22.82	188,947	25.75	225,755	13	36,809
Maine	20.20	18,634	22.45	19,567	11	933
Massachusetts	14.99	66,137	16.65	84,557	11	18,420
Wisconsin	14.60	64,074	16.16	73,080	11	9,006
New Hampshire	10.85	7,761	11.85	12,236	9	4,475
Georgia	21.93	107,270	23.74	152,241	8	44,971
Kansas	18.84	41,567	20.23	50,245	7	8,678
Illinois	23.27	232,025	24.27	271,889	4	39,864
Indiana	20.60	107,121	21.47	118,010	4	10,889
Colorado	16.66	43,763	17.23	55,659	3	11,896
Iowa	16.64	41,564	17.09	45,228	3	3,664
Florida	26.35	199,106	26.55	313,231	1	114,125
Washington	18.31	69,858	18.44	89,168	1	19,310
Oregon	20.34	50,535	20.13	51,635	-1	1,101
Nebraska	19.42	29,290	18.71	29,478	-4	188
Tennessee	28.90	114,313	27.83	123,466	-4	9,153
Virginia	18.41	79,434	17.43	92,544	-5	13,110
Mississippi	38.01	87,044	35.49	86,319	-7	-726
South Carolina	25.90	88,330	23.99	74,702	-7	-13,628
Arkansas	30.04	60,633	27.02	59,990	-10	-643
Pennsylvania	20.60	179,593	18.38	179,569	-11	-23
Idaho	24.59	26,458	21.74	22,397	-12	-4,061
South Dakota	24.94	18,767	21.92	13,437	-12	-5,330
Rhode Island	24.47	16,862	20.39	15,266	-17	-1,596
Hawaii	22.03	20,490	18.35	19,015	-17	-1,475
Utah	14.14	32,778	11.36	26,338	-20	-6,440
Alabama	32.46	118,385	25.86	100,936	-20	-17,449
Alaska	18.01	9,452	13.78	8,749	-23	-703
Delaware	20.07	10,709	15.27	8,750	-24	-1,959
New Jersey	***20.88***	***119,125***	***15.37***	***107,412***	***-26***	***-11,713***
Vermont	***21.91***	***10,754***	***13.31***	***7,521***	***-39***	***-3,233***

* States in bold italic letters had significantly positive or significantly negative growth as indicated. Other states may have had similar changes, but because of small sample sizes these changes are considered statistically insignificant. Changes in poverty rates are rounded to the nearest whole number.

APPENDIX TABLE 5

Percentage of children under age six by family structure, maternal education, and parental education, by state, 1979–1983 to 1992–1996, and percentage change

	% living with mother only			% with mother who completed high school			% with at least one parent employed full time		
	1979–83	1992–96	% change	1979–83	1992–96	% change	1979–83	1992–96	% change
USA	**19.23**	**23.99**	**24.77**	**78.71**	**82.00**	**4.18**	**64.96**	**66.97**	**3.09**
Alabama	25.02	30.21	20.75	71.57	81.25	13.53	58.37	65.06	11.47
Alaska	15.35	15.93	3.73	87.75	92.59	5.51	45.77	67.60	47.69
Arizona	17.45	24.01	37.56	75.85	76.18	0.43	68.31	64.82	-5.12
Arkansas	22.66	21.20	-6.42	74.42	86.16	15.77	59.49	69.52	16.86
California	19.19	22.33	16.36	72.89	68.73	-5.71	58.89	62.26	5.72
Colorado	14.47	20.16	39.37	87.82	86.14	-1.92	71.88	73.51	2.26
Connecticut	17.81	23.06	29.50	85.75	90.98	6.10	77.11	67.13	-12.95
Delaware	20.39	24.87	21.97	84.12	91.92	9.27	64.26	73.90	14.99
District of Columbia	55.25	53.75	-2.71	74.87	66.20	-11.58	51.45	42.02	-18.32
Florida	27.17	29.98	10.34	75.65	82.11	8.54	62.38	65.42	4.86
Georgia	23.38	28.72	22.82	75.53	82.97	9.85	67.07	71.59	6.73
Hawaii	14.85	22.25	49.87	87.94	88.96	1.16	54.35	65.61	20.71
Idaho	10.05	16.79	67.06	85.08	84.01	-1.26	67.32	66.65	-1.00
Illinois	22.04	26.69	21.10	78.78	81.99	4.07	63.76	66.63	4.49
Indiana	18.48	22.29	20.61	76.55	88.67	15.84	61.21	69.95	14.28
Iowa	13.45	16.46	22.40	89.89	90.46	0.64	76.65	78.16	1.97
Kansas	17.56	20.89	18.94	89.94	90.68	0.83	70.96	74.03	4.33
Kentucky	13.92	26.17	88.03	74.85	82.55	10.28	68.50	66.11	-3.49
Louisiana	25.71	37.14	44.45	72.58	73.85	1.75	58.26	52.73	-9.49
Maine	12.74	20.19	58.48	85.45	88.46	3.52	69.64	67.04	-3.74
Maryland	19.81	19.07	-3.72	85.84	85.43	-0.47	74.03	70.17	-5.22
Massachusetts	17.08	22.18	29.87	82.87	88.79	7.15	72.09	71.42	-0.93
Michigan	21.06	25.19	19.63	81.12	85.51	5.41	58.80	62.33	6.01
Minnesota	11.76	20.26	72.22	91.57	92.90	1.45	71.70	78.25	9.14
Mississippi	27.61	38.71	40.21	67.70	79.18	16.96	59.81	56.93	-4.82
Missouri	17.66	29.70	68.19	79.83	86.67	8.57	65.96	65.57	-0.59
Montana	9.76	17.95	83.90	91.29	84.75	-7.17	71.71	68.13	-5.00
Nebraska	11.07	19.55	76.53	91.49	93.85	2.58	77.77	79.92	2.76
Nevada	14.60	20.58	40.93	83.26	81.76	-1.80	63.18	68.63	8.63
New Hampshire	10.87	17.69	62.74	84.60	91.27	7.89	76.60	65.75	-14.16
New Jersey	21.73	18.57	-14.55	78.99	89.59	13.42	68.55	73.07	6.61
New Mexico	14.07	27.98	98.91	74.54	79.12	6.15	61.61	62.51	1.47
New York	23.85	27.75	16.38	78.03	81.69	4.69	66.39	62.63	-5.66
North Carolina	18.10	24.51	35.44	79.33	83.18	4.86	66.55	69.18	3.96
North Dakota	8.80	14.43	63.98	92.98	94.10	1.20	70.25	78.15	11.24
Ohio	17.54	23.18	32.10	82.64	87.50	5.89	67.61	68.83	1.81
Oklahoma	16.88	25.00	48.11	79.65	85.07	6.80	63.88	62.47	-2.20
Oregon	18.60	22.47	20.83	87.89	86.25	-1.87	58.76	63.35	7.82
Pennsylvania	16.24	19.80	21.90	85.24	89.05	4.47	64.55	70.01	8.45
Rhode Island	19.76	21.05	6.52	70.82	80.49	13.65	60.96	66.21	8.61
South Carolina	23.96	29.70	23.95	72.39	80.90	11.75	59.12	64.52	9.13
South Dakota	11.57	15.94	37.79	90.12	89.21	-1.02	72.40	80.33	10.95
Tennessee	25.63	28.97	13.02	71.54	80.91	13.09	64.39	63.77	-0.96
Texas	17.83	23.44	31.48	68.03	73.09	7.44	68.68	67.41	-1.86
Utah	8.89	10.25	15.32	89.55	91.94	2.67	72.47	78.37	8.15
Vermont	12.56	12.63	0.53	88.93	94.16	5.89	71.70	73.41	2.39
Virginia	17.53	20.40	16.39	81.28	87.76	7.97	65.48	76.19	16.35
Washington	15.66	18.93	20.90	85.73	89.66	4.58	58.71	67.80	15.48
West Virginia	13.39	23.33	74.31	71.62	77.62	8.38	54.53	50.42	-7.54
Wisconsin	14.01	21.07	50.45	88.54	91.35	3.17	70.80	75.26	6.30
Wyoming	10.14	17.23	69.98	86.38	92.62	7.22	73.74	75.71	2.68

Early Childhood Poverty Research Briefs

This research brief series has been established to present timely research findings on the nature, scope, and impact of young child poverty in the United States, primarily based on analyses by researchers at or affiliated with the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP). This series will explore the causes and consequences of young child poverty as well as identify and critically examine promising strategies to reduce the incidence of young child poverty. As with much of NCCP's work, there will be a strong state and local focus on young child poverty and related issues.

The first brief in this series describes the considerable variation among the states' young child poverty rates (YCPRs) and suggests that changes in three demographic factors—family structure, maternal education, and parental employment—account for almost one-third of the changes in state young child poverty rates over the last two decades. It concludes that more than half of the increase in poor young children can be attributed to the nation's three most populous states—California, New York, and Texas. Five additional states experienced notable increases in their YCPRs, while two states saw their YCPRs fall dramatically. The findings of this research brief are important in light of the states' obligation to monitor their child poverty rates under provisions of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 and to submit corrective action plans if the rates have increased by more than 5 percent from the previous year due to the effects of welfare reform.

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Early Childhood Poverty Research Brief 1
Young Child Poverty in the States—Wide Variation and Significant Change

by **Neil G. Bennett**, Director of Demographic Research and Analysis and **Jiali Li**, Associate Research Scientist at NCCP

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National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) was established in 1989 at the School of Public Health, Columbia University, with core support from the Ford Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The Center's mission is to identify and promote strategies that reduce the number of young children living in poverty in the United States, and that improve the life chances of the millions of children under age six who are growing up poor.

The Center:

- Alerts the public to demographic statistics about child poverty and to the scientific research on the serious impact of poverty on young children, their families, and their communities.
- Designs and conducts field-based studies to identify programs, policies, and practices that work best for young children and their families living in poverty.
- Disseminates information about early childhood care and education, child health, and family and community support to government officials, private organizations, and child advocates, and provides a state and local perspective on relevant national issues.
- Brings together public and private groups to assess the efficacy of current and potential strategies to lower the young child poverty rate and to improve the well-being of young children in poverty, their families, and their communities.
- Challenges policymakers and opinion leaders to help ameliorate the adverse consequences of poverty on young children.