

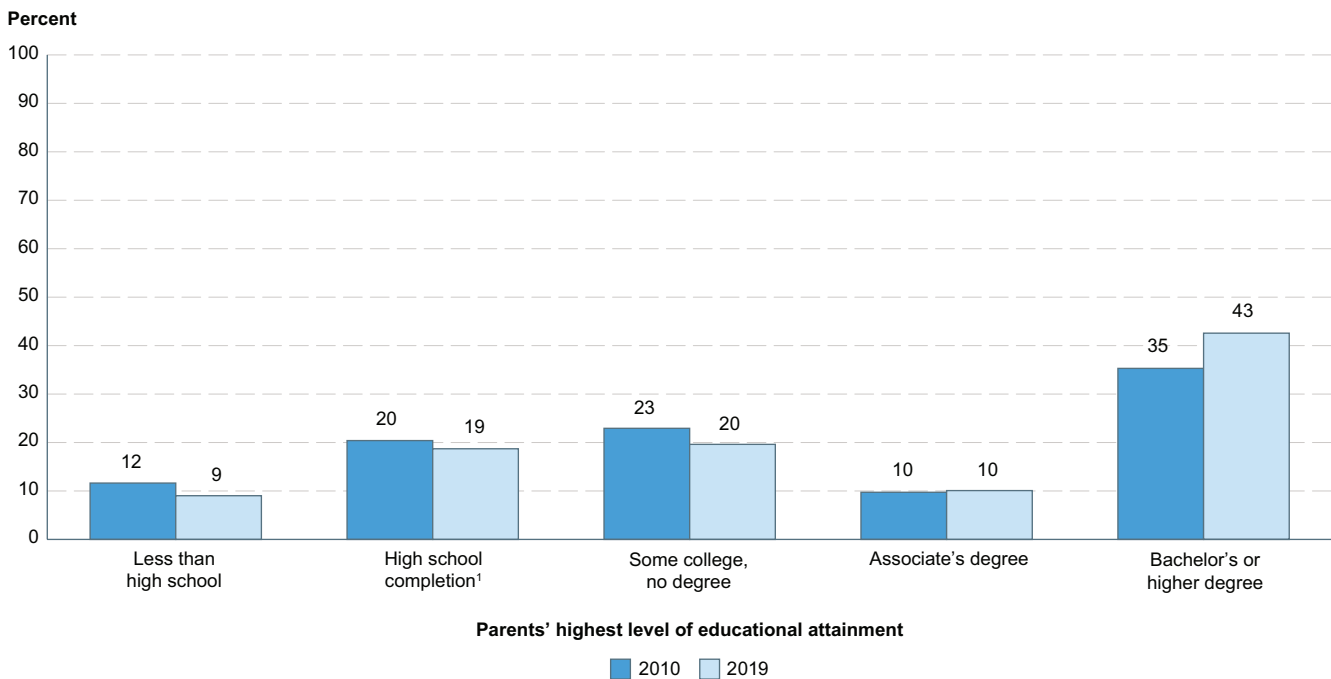
Characteristics of Children’s Families

In 2019, some 9 percent of children under the age of 18 lived in households in which no parent had completed high school, 26 percent lived in mother-only households, 8 percent lived in father-only households, and 16 percent were in families living in poverty.

Characteristics of children’s families are associated with children’s educational experiences and their academic achievement. Prior research has found that the risk factors of living in a household without a parent who has completed high school, living in a single-parent household, and living in poverty are associated with poor educational outcomes—including receiving low achievement scores, having to repeat a grade, and

dropping out of high school.^{1,2} This indicator examines the prevalence of these risk factors among racial/ethnic groups and, for poverty status, among states. For more information on the relationship between family socioeconomic status and later postsecondary and employment outcomes, see *The Condition of Education 2019* Spotlight indicator [Young Adult Educational and Employment Outcomes by Family Socioeconomic Status](#).

Figure 1. Percentage distribution of children under age 18, by parents’ highest level of educational attainment: 2010 and 2019



¹ Includes parents who completed high school through equivalency programs, such as a GED program.

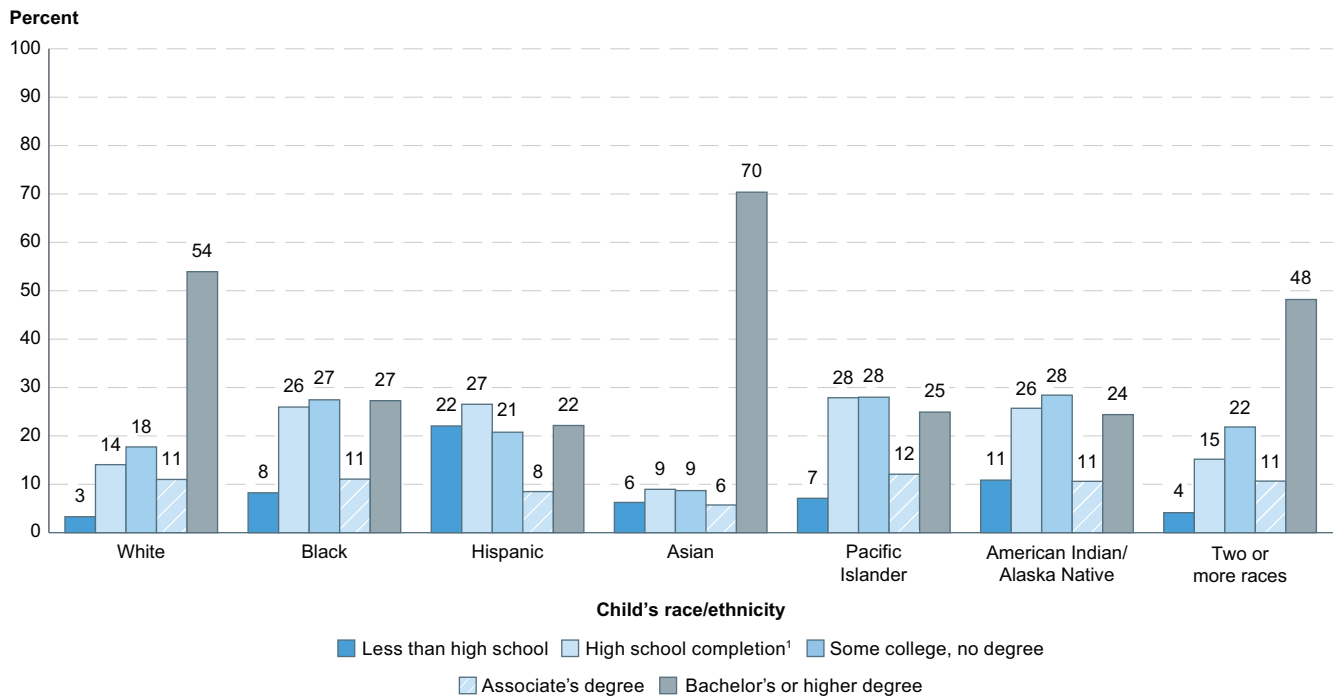
NOTE: Includes only children under age 18 who resided with at least one of their parents (including an adoptive or stepparent; excluding a foster parent). Parents' highest level of educational attainment is the highest level of education attained by any parent residing in the same household as the child. Parents include adoptive and stepparents but exclude parents not residing in the same household as their child. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2010 and 2019. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 104.70.

In 2019, although just over half of children under 18 lived in households in which one parent had completed at least a college degree (an associate's degree or higher), almost half lived in households in which no parent had a college degree. Specifically, 9 percent lived in households in which no parent had completed high school, 19 percent lived in households in which the highest level of education was high school completion,³ and 20 percent lived in households in which the highest level of education was some college attendance but no degree. Ten percent lived in households in which the highest level of education attained by either parent was an associate's degree. Forty-three percent of children lived in households in which the highest level of education attained by either parent was a bachelor's or higher degree, including 23 percent with a bachelor's degree, 14 with a master's degree, and 6 percent with a doctor's degree.⁴

Compared with 2010, there were lower percentages of children under age 18 in 2019 who lived in households in which no parent had completed a postsecondary degree. This includes children in households in which no parent had completed high school (9 vs. 12 percent), in which the highest level of education attained by either parent was high school completion (19 vs. 20 percent), and in which the highest level of education attained by either parent was some college attendance but no degree (20 vs. 23 percent). This, in turn, means there was a higher percentage of children in 2019 than in 2010 who lived in households in which the highest level of parental education was a postsecondary degree. Specifically, in 2019, some 43 percent lived in households in which the highest level of education attained by either parent was a bachelor's or higher degree, compared with 35 percent in 2010.⁵

Figure 2. Percentage distribution of children under age 18, by child's race/ethnicity and parents' highest level of educational attainment: 2019

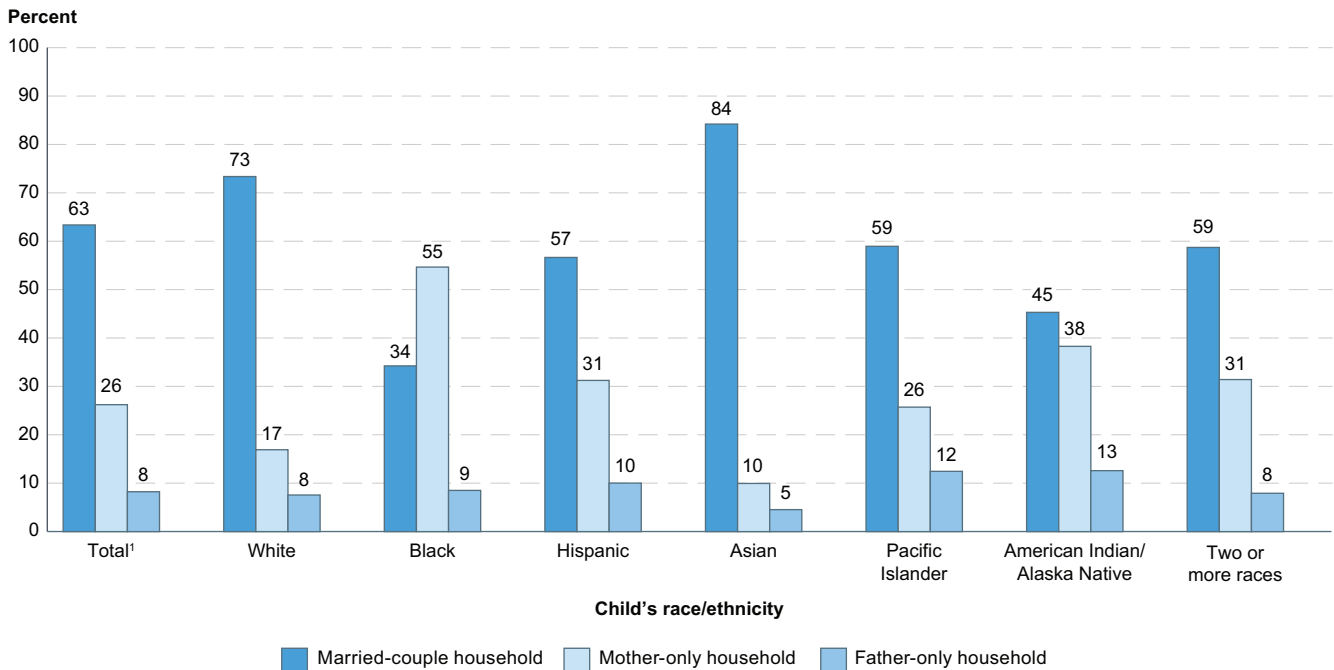


¹ Includes parents who completed high school through equivalency programs, such as a GED program.
 NOTE: Includes only children under age 18 who resided with at least one of their parents (including an adoptive or stepparent; excluding a foster parent). Parents' highest level of educational attainment is the highest level of education attained by any parent residing in the same household as the child. Parents include adoptive and stepparents but exclude parents not residing in the same household as their child. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2019. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 104.70.

The highest level of education attained by either parent of children under age 18 varied across racial/ethnic groups in 2019. The percentage of children under age 18 who lived in households in which no parent had completed high school was higher for Hispanic children (22 percent) than for children of other racial/ethnic groups: American Indian/Alaska Native (11 percent), Black (8 percent), Pacific Islander (7 percent), Asian (6 percent), Two or more races (4 percent), and White (3 percent). The percentage of children who lived in households without a parent who

had completed high school was lower for White children than for children of any other racial/ethnic group. The percentage of children in 2019 who lived in households in which the highest level of education attained by either parent was at least a bachelor's degree was lower for Hispanic (22 percent), American Indian/Alaska Native (24 percent), Pacific Islander (25 percent), and Black (27 percent) than for Two or more races (48 percent), White (54 percent), and Asian children (70 percent).

Figure 3. Percentage distribution of children under age 18, by child's race/ethnicity and family structure: 2019



¹ Includes respondents who wrote in some other race that was not included as an option on the questionnaire.

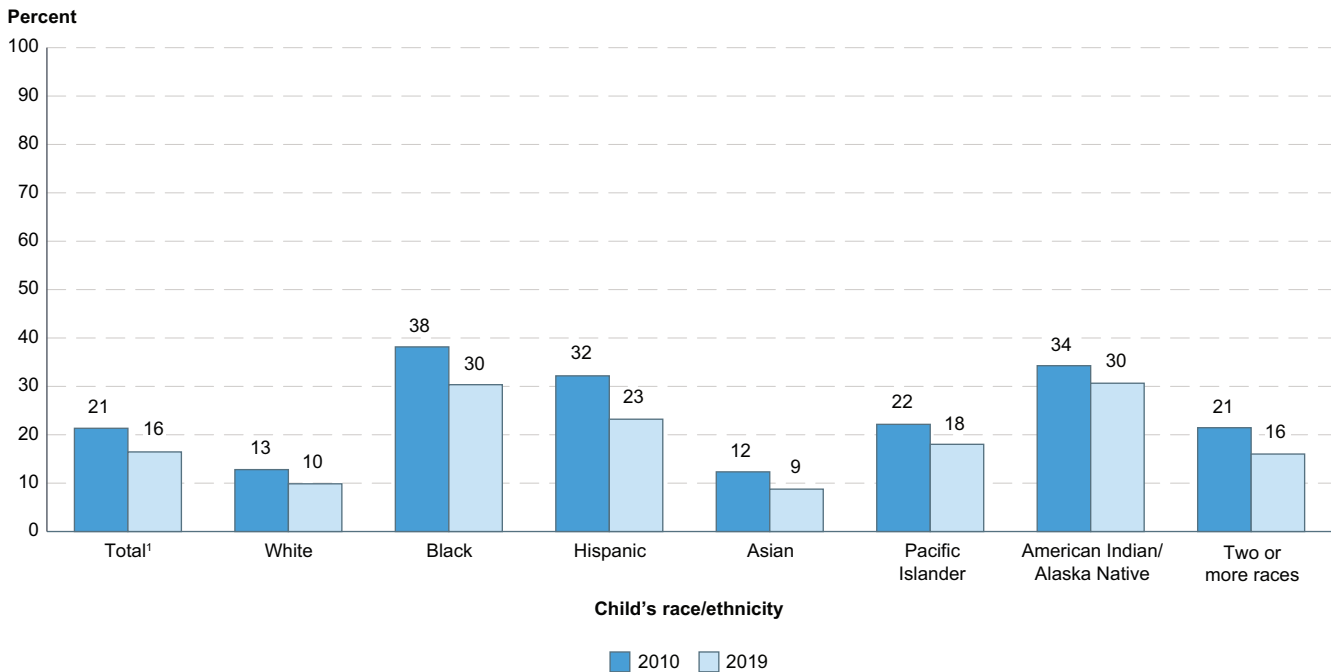
NOTE: Data do not include foster children, children in unrelated subfamilies, children living in group quarters, and children who were reported as the householder or spouse of the householder. A "mother-only household" has a female householder, with no spouse present (i.e., the householder is unmarried or the spouse is not in the household), while a "father-only household" has a male householder, with no spouse present. Includes all children who live either with their parent(s) or with a householder to whom they are related by birth, marriage, or adoption (except a child who is the spouse of the householder). Children are classified by their parents' marital status or, if no parents are present in the household, by the marital status of the householder who is related to the children. The householder is the person (or one of the people) who owns or rents (maintains) the housing unit. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data. Detail does not sum to 100 percent because the "All other children" category is not reported.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2019. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 102.20.

In 2019, although the majority of children under age 18 lived in married-couple households (63 percent), 26 percent lived in mother-only households and 8 percent lived in father-only households.⁶ This pattern—of a higher percentage of children living in married-couple households than in mother- and father-only households—

was observed for children across all racial/ethnic groups, except for Black children. The majority of Black children lived in mother-only households (55 percent), compared with 34 percent who lived in married-couple households and 9 percent who lived in father-only households.

Figure 4. Percentage of children under age 18 in families living in poverty, by child's race/ethnicity: 2010 and 2019



¹ Includes respondents who wrote in some other race that was not included as an option on the questionnaire.

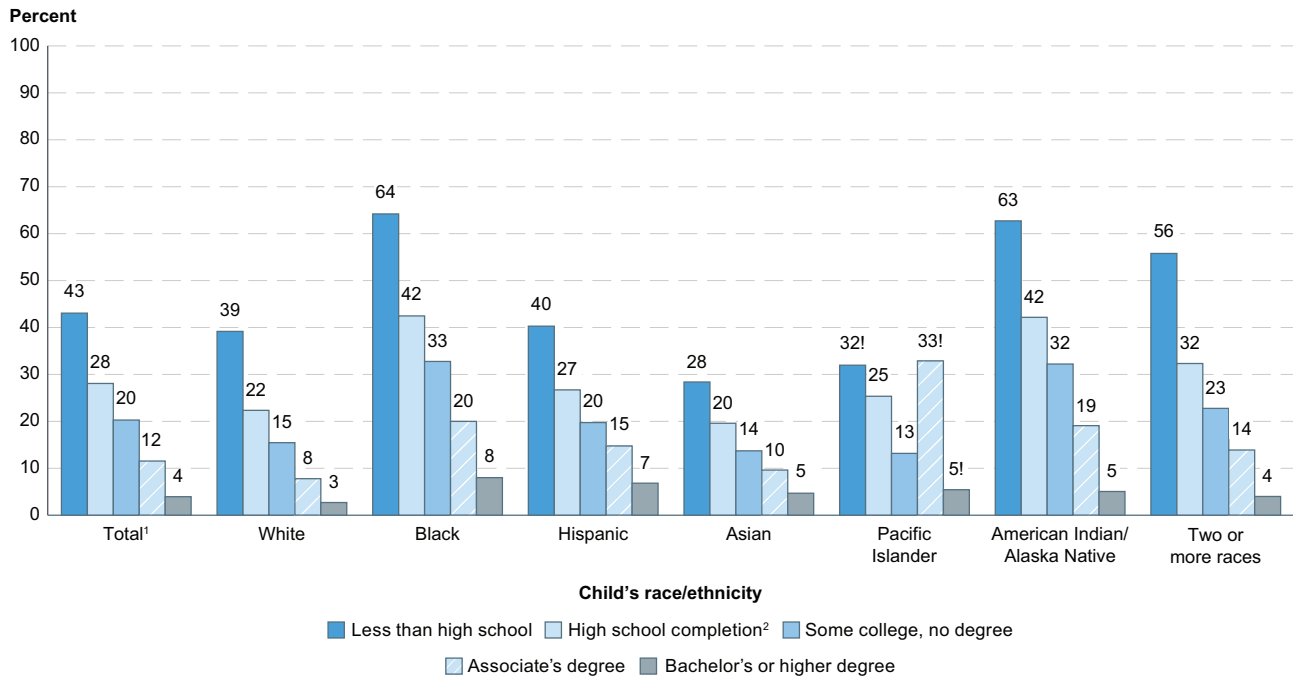
NOTE: The measure of child poverty includes all children who are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption (except a child who is the spouse of the householder). The householder is the person (or one of the people) who owns or rents (maintains) the housing unit. For additional information about poverty status, see <https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/poverty/guidance/poverty-measures.html>. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2010 and 2019. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 102.60.

In 2019, approximately 11.6 million children under age 18 were in families living in poverty.⁷ The poverty rate for children in 2019 (16 percent) was lower than in 2010 (21 percent). This pattern was observed for children across all racial/ethnic groups, except for Pacific Islander children. For example, 23 percent of Hispanic children lived in poverty in 2019, compared with 32 percent in 2010, and 30 percent of Black children lived in poverty in 2019, compared with 38 percent in 2010. For Pacific Islander children, the 2019 poverty rate was not measurably different from the rate in 2010.

The poverty rate for children under age 18 varied across racial/ethnic groups in 2019. American Indian/Alaska Native (30 percent), Black (30 percent), and Hispanic children (23 percent) had poverty rates higher than the national average (16 percent), while White (10 percent) and Asian children (9 percent) had rates lower than the national average. The poverty rates for children of Two or more races and Pacific Islander children were not measurably different from the national average. For additional information about poverty rates and racial/ethnic subgroups, please refer to the *Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups* report.

Figure 5. Percentage of children under age 18 in families living in poverty, by child's race/ethnicity and parents' highest level of educational attainment: 2019



¹ Interpret data with caution. The coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent.

¹ Includes respondents who wrote in some other race that was not included as an option on the questionnaire.

² Includes parents who completed high school through equivalency programs, such as a GED program.

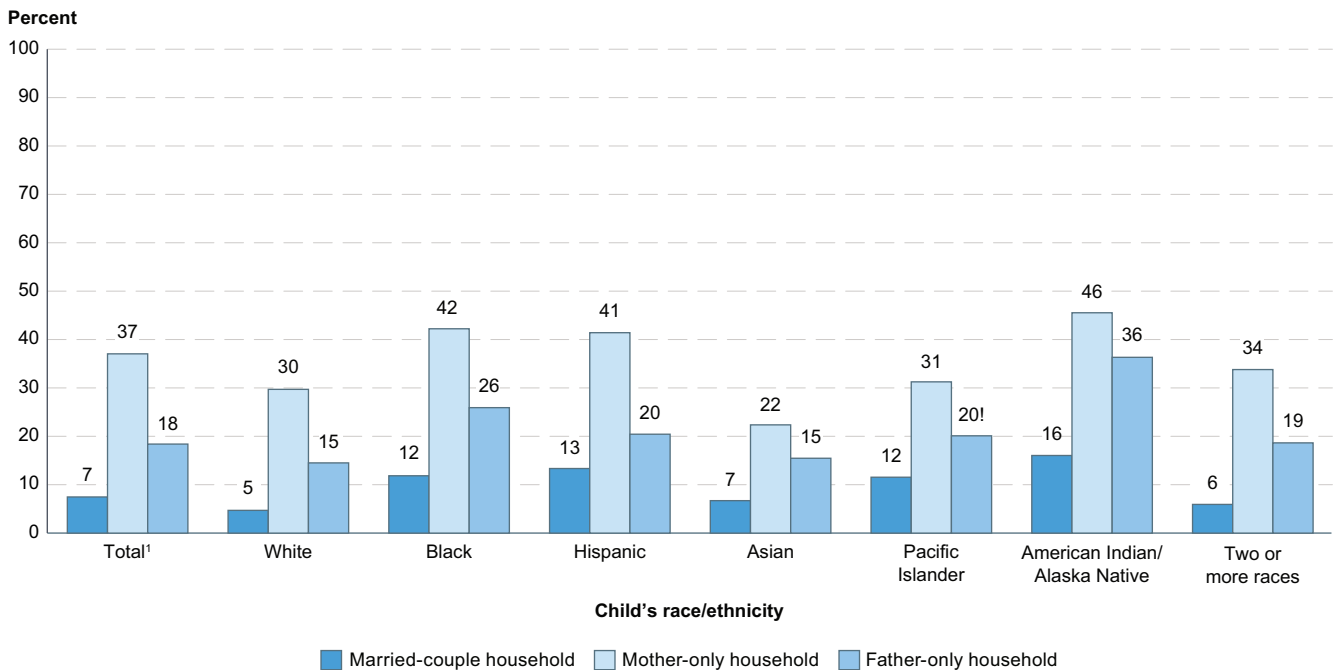
NOTE: Includes only children under age 18 who resided with at least one of their parents (including an adoptive or stepparent; excluding a foster parent). Parents' highest level of educational attainment is the highest level of education attained by any parent residing in the same household as the child. Parents include adoptive and stepparents but exclude parents not residing in the same household as their child. The measure of child poverty includes children who are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption (except a child who is the spouse of the householder). The householder is the person (or one of the people) who owns or rents (maintains) the housing unit. For additional information about poverty status, see <https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/poverty/guidance/poverty-measures.html>. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2019. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 102.62.

In 2019, the poverty rate for children under age 18 was highest for those in households in which no parent had completed high school (43 percent) and lowest for those in households in which the highest level of education attained by either parent was a bachelor's or higher degree (4 percent). This pattern held both overall and within all racial/ethnic groups except Pacific Islander children.

For Pacific Islander children, the poverty rate by parent's education level was higher (25 to 33 percent) than the poverty rate for those living in households in which the highest level of education was a bachelor's or higher degree (5 percent) for every level except children living in households in which the highest level of education attained by either parent was some college (13 percent).

Figure 6. Percentage of children under age 18 in families living in poverty, by child's race/ethnicity and family structure: 2019



! Interpret data with caution. The coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent.

¹ Includes respondents who wrote in some other race that was not included as an option on the questionnaire.

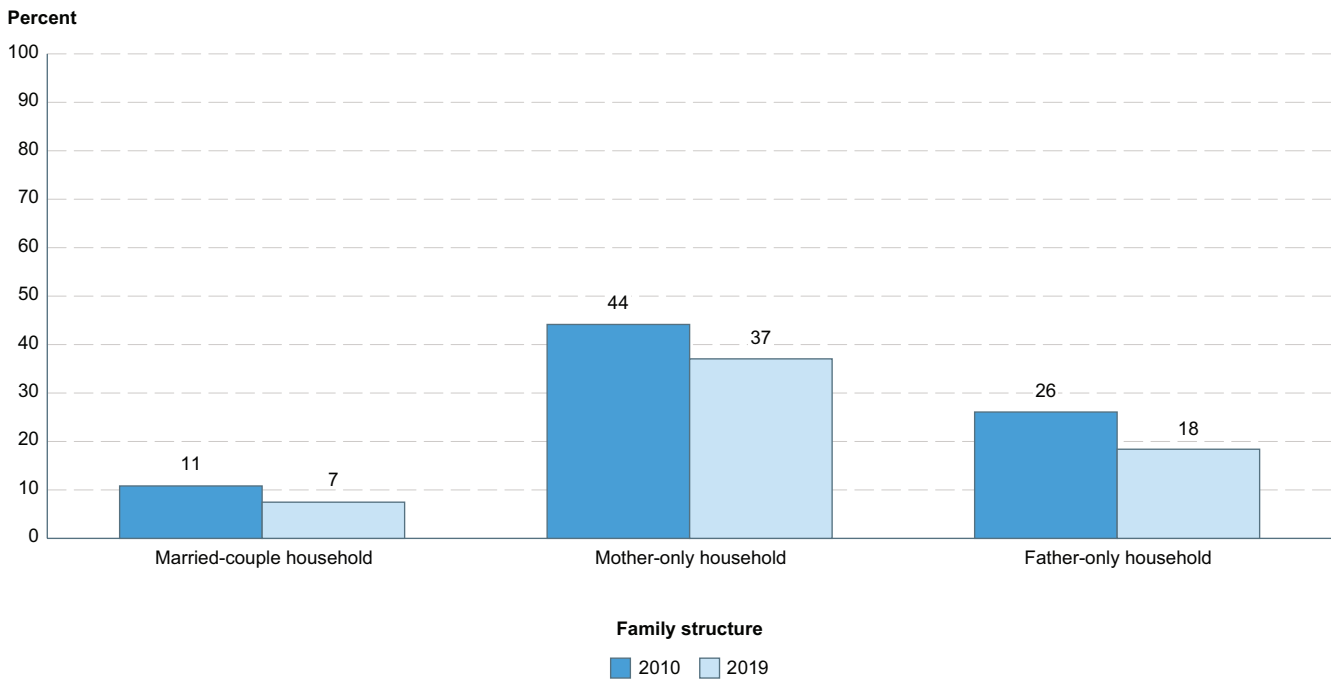
NOTE: A "mother-only household" has a female householder, with no spouse present (i.e., the householder is unmarried or their spouse is not in the household), while a "father-only household" has a male householder, with no spouse present. Includes all children who live either with their parent(s) or with a householder to whom they are related by birth, marriage, or adoption (except a child who is the spouse of the householder). Children are classified by their parents' marital status or, if no parents are present in the household, by the marital status of the householder who is related to the children. The householder is the person (or one of the people) who owns or rents (maintains) the housing unit. For additional information about poverty status, see <https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/poverty/guidance/poverty-measures.html>. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2019. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 102.60.

In 2019, the poverty rate for children under age 18 was highest for those living in mother-only households (37 percent), followed by those living in father-only households (18 percent). Children living in married-couple households had the lowest poverty rate (7 percent). This pattern of children living in married-couple households having the lowest poverty rate was observed across most

racial/ethnic groups. The exception was Pacific Islander children, for whom there was no measurable difference between poverty rates in father-only households and other household structures. For all racial/ethnic groups, poverty rates were higher for children in mother-only households than for those in married-couple households.

Figure 7. Percentage of children under age 18 in families living in poverty, by family structure: 2010 and 2019

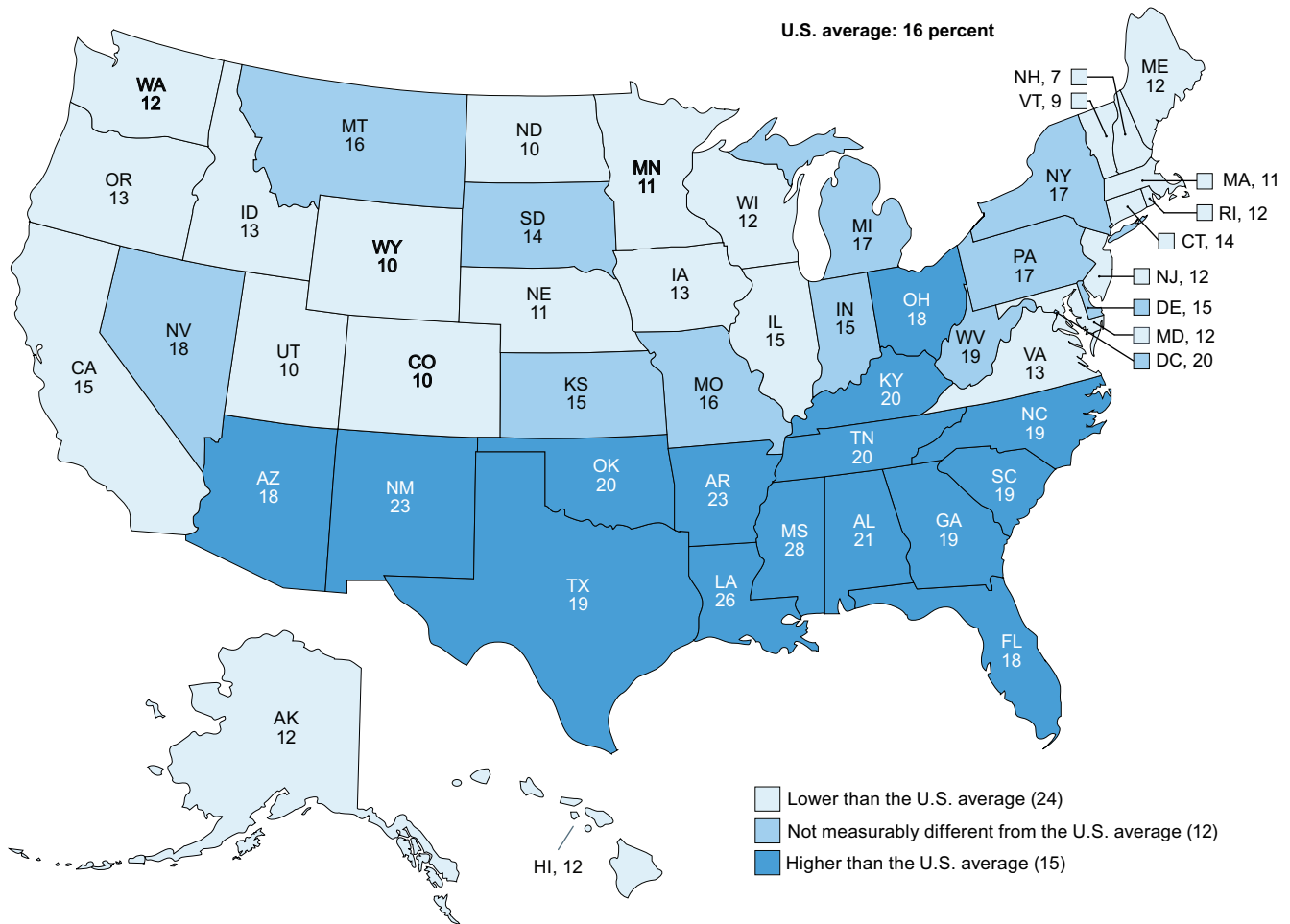


NOTE: A “mother-only household” has a female householder, with no spouse present (i.e., the householder is unmarried or their spouse is not in the household), while a “father-only household” has a male householder, with no spouse present. Includes all children who live either with their parent(s) or with a householder to whom they are related by birth, marriage, or adoption (except a child who is the spouse of the householder). Children are classified by their parents’ marital status or, if no parents are present in the household, by the marital status of the householder who is related to the children. The householder is the person (or one of the people) who owns or rents (maintains) the housing unit. For additional information about poverty status, see <https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/poverty/guidance/poverty-measures.html>. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2010 and 2019. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 102.60.

Similar to the overall difference between 2010 and 2019 in the poverty rate for children under age 18, the poverty rate was lower in 2019 than in 2010 for children living in mother-only households (37 vs. 44 percent), father-only households (18 vs. 26 percent), and married-couple households (7 vs. 11 percent). This pattern of lower child

poverty rates in 2019 than 2010 by family structure was observed across all racial/ethnic groups, except Pacific Islander and American Indian/Alaska Native children, for whom there were no measurable differences between the two years.

Figure 8. Percentage of children under age 18 in families living in poverty, by state and comparison with the national average: 2019



NOTE: The measure of child poverty includes all children who are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption (except a child who is the spouse of the householder). The householder is the person (or one of the people) who owns or rents (maintains) the housing unit. For additional information about poverty status, see <https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/poverty/guidance/poverty-measures.html>.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2019. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 102.40.

While the national average poverty rate for children under age 18 was 16 percent in 2019, the rates among states ranged from 7 percent in New Hampshire to 28 percent in Mississippi. Twenty-four states had poverty rates for children that were lower than the national average, 15 states had rates that were higher than the national average, and 11 states and the District of Columbia had rates that were not measurably different

from the national average. Of the 15 states that had poverty rates higher than the national average, the majority (12) were located in the South. In 39 states and the District of Columbia, the poverty rates were lower in 2019 than in 2010. In the remaining 11 states, there was no measurable difference between the poverty rates in 2010 and 2019.

Endnotes:

¹ Pungello, E.P., Kainz, K., Burchinal, M., Wasik, B.H., Sparling, J.J., Ramey, C.T., and Campbell, F.A. (2010, February). Early Educational Intervention, Early Cumulative Risk, and the Early Home Environment as Predictors of Young Adult Outcomes Within a High-Risk Sample. *Child Development*, 81(1): 410-426. Retrieved January 8, 2021, from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2009.01403.x/full>.

² Ross, T., Kena, G., Rathbun, A., KewalRamani, A., Zhang, J., Kristapovich, P., and Manning, E. (2012). *Higher Education: Gaps in Access and Persistence Study* (NCES 2012-046). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved January 8, 2021, from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2012046>.

³ Includes parents who completed high school through equivalency programs, such as a GED program.

⁴ Includes parents who had completed professional degrees.

⁵ Although the percentage of children living in households in which the highest level of education attained by either parent was an associate's degree was also higher in 2019 than in 2010 (10.1 vs. 9.7 percent), both percentages round to 10 percent.

⁶ A "mother-only household" has a female householder, with no spouse present (i.e., the householder is unmarried or the spouse is not in the household), while a "father-only

household" has a male householder, with no spouse present. Includes all children who live either with their parent(s) or with a householder to whom they are related by birth, marriage, or adoption (except a child who is the spouse of the householder). Children are classified by their parents' marital status or, if no parents are present in the household, by the marital status of the householder who is related to the children. The householder is the person (or one of the people) who owns or rents (maintains) the housing unit. Foster children, children in unrelated subfamilies, children living in group quarters, and children who were reported as the householder or spouse of the householder are not included in this analysis.

⁷ In this indicator, data on household income and the number of people living in the household are combined with the poverty threshold, published by the Census Bureau, to determine the poverty status of children. A household includes all families in which children are related to the householder by birth or adoption, or through marriage. The householder is the person (or one of the people) who owns or rents (maintains) the housing unit. In 2019, the poverty threshold for a family of four with two related children under 18 years old was \$25,926. For a more detailed breakdown of the 2019 poverty rate, refer to [this table](#).

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, tables 102.20, 102.40, 102.60, 102.62, and 104.70

Related indicators and resources: [Children Living in Poverty \[Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups\]](#); [Children's Living Arrangements \[Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups\]](#); [Concentration of Public School Students Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch](#); [Disparities in Educational Outcomes Among Male Youth \[The Condition of Education 2015 Spotlight\]](#); [Risk Factors and Academic Outcomes in Kindergarten Through Third Grade \[The Condition of Education 2017 Spotlight\]](#); [Snapshot: Children Living in Poverty for Racial/Ethnic Subgroups \[Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups\]](#); [Young Adult Educational and Employment Outcomes by Family Socioeconomic Status \[The Condition of Education 2019 Spotlight\]](#)

Glossary: Associate's degree; Bachelor's degree; College; Doctor's degree; Educational attainment; Geographic region; High school completer; Household; Master's degree; Poverty (official measure); Racial/ethnic group