

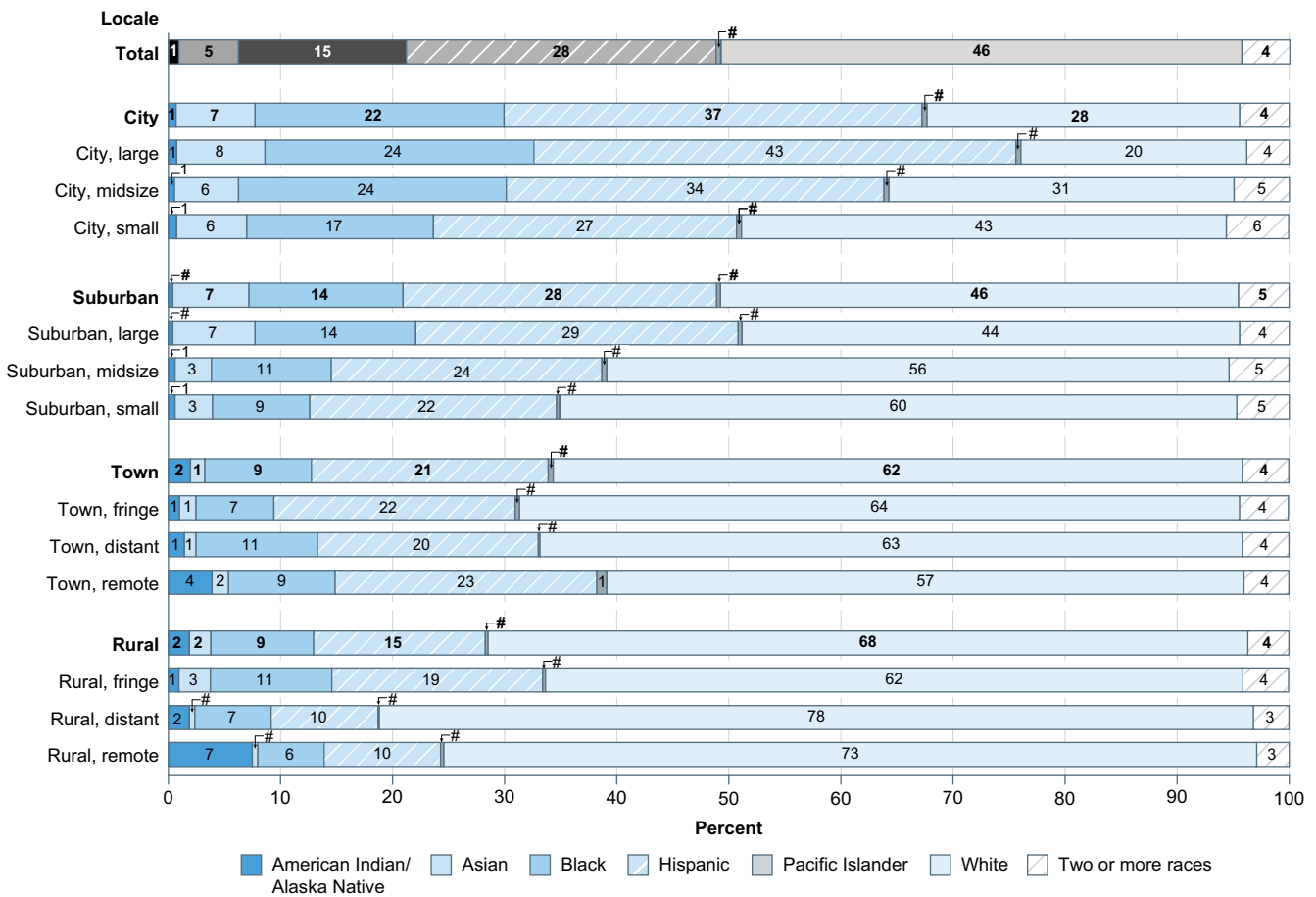
Children in Rural Areas and Their Family Characteristics

Nationally, 14 percent of related children ages 5 to 17 in rural areas were living in poverty in 2019. This poverty rate for children in rural areas was higher than this poverty rate in suburban areas (12 percent) but lower than this poverty rate in towns and cities (21 percent each).

Characteristics of children and their families such as student racial/ethnic composition of the child’s school, parents’ educational attainment, family structure, and poverty rate are associated with children’s education experiences and their academic achievement.^{1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7} Using data from the Common Core of Data (CCD), the

Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey of the National Household Education Surveys (NHES) Program, and the American Community Survey (ACS), this indicator examines whether characteristics of children and their families differ by locale⁸ and, where available, by state.

Figure 1. Percentage distribution of public elementary and secondary student enrollment, by locale and race/ethnicity: Fall 2019



Rounds to zero.

NOTE: Data in this table represent the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. Please visit NCES’s [Education Across America website](#) for the definition of locale.

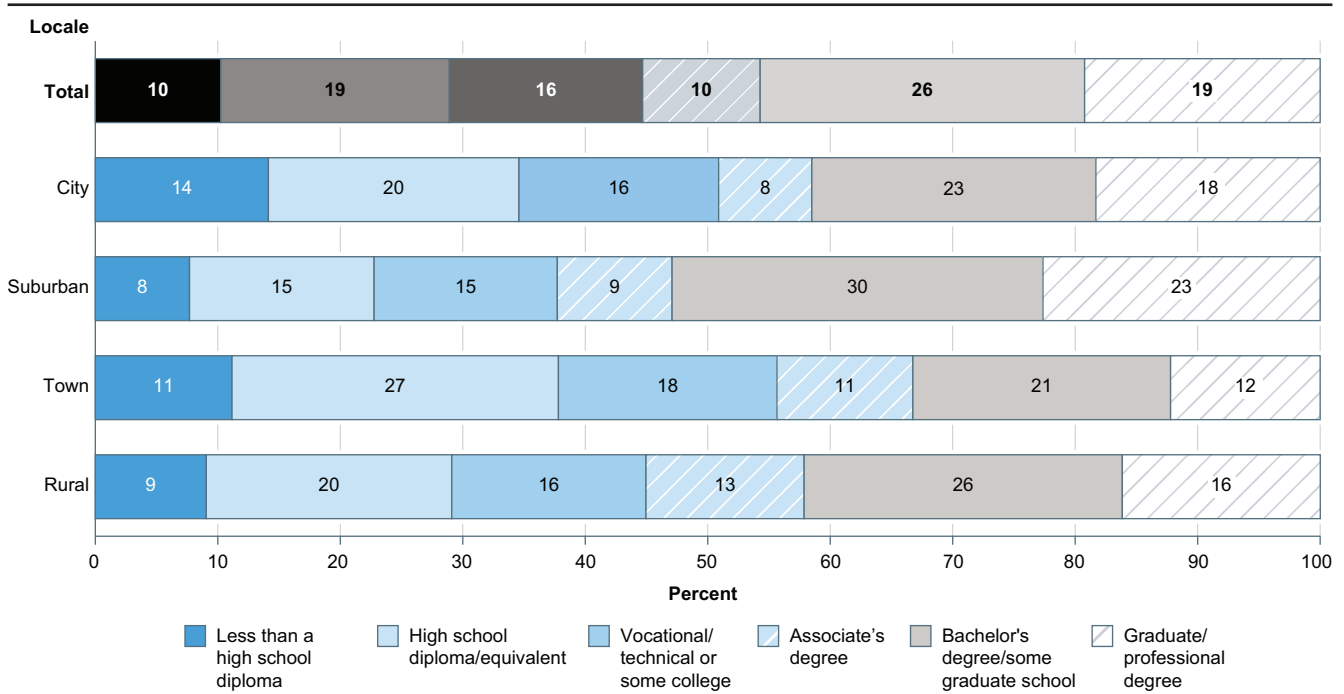
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), “Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey,” 2019–20. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 214.40.

In fall 2019, the percentage of students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools who were White was higher in schools in rural areas (68 percent) than in schools in towns (62 percent), suburban areas (46 percent), and cities (28 percent). In addition, the percentage of students in schools in rural areas who were American Indian/Alaska Native (2 percent) was higher than in schools in cities and suburban areas (both at less than 1 percent). Conversely, the percentage of students in schools in rural areas who were Black (9 percent) was lower than the percentages in schools in other locales who were Black (22 percent in cities, 14 percent in suburban areas, and 9 percent in towns). The percentage of students in schools in rural areas who were Hispanic (15 percent) was also lower than the percentages in schools in other locales who were Hispanic (37 percent in cities, 28 percent in suburban areas, and 21 percent in towns). There was a higher percentage of students in schools in rural areas

who were Asian (2 percent) than in schools in towns (1 percent), but a lower percentage of students in schools in rural areas who were Asian than in schools in suburban areas and cities (7 percent each).

The percentage of students who were White was higher in remote (73 percent) and distant (78 percent) rural areas than in all other geographic sublocales (ranging from 20 percent in large cities to 64 percent in fringe towns). The percentage of students who were Black was lower in remote (6 percent) and distant (7 percent)⁹ rural areas than in all other geographic sublocales (ranging from 7 percent in fringe towns to 24 percent each in large and midsize cities). In addition, the percentage of students who were Hispanic was lower in distant and remote rural areas (each 10 percent) than in all other geographic locales (ranging from 19 percent in fringe rural areas to 43 percent in large cities).

Figure 2. Percentage distribution of students ages 5 through 17 in kindergarten through grade 12, by locale and highest education level of parents/guardians in the household: 2019



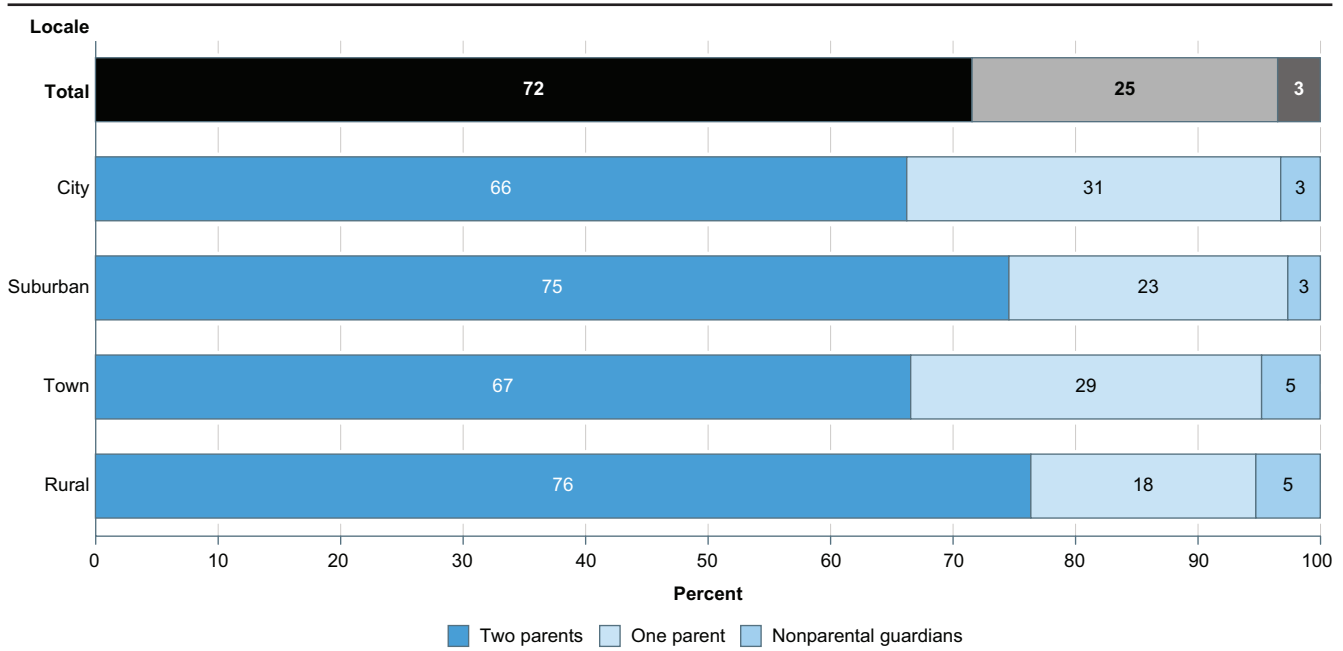
NOTE: Includes homeschooled students. Although rounded numbers are displayed, figures are based on unrounded data. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. Please visit NCES's [Education Across America website](#) for the definition of locale.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey of the National Household Education Surveys Program (PFI-NHES:2019). See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 102.90.

Prior research has found that living in a household without a parent who has completed high school is associated with poor educational outcomes, including attainment outcomes.¹⁰ In 2019, the percentage of 5- to 17-year-olds in kindergarten through 12th grade whose parents or guardians had earned less than a high school diploma as their highest level of education was lower in rural areas (9 percent) than in cities (14 percent). However, there was no measurable difference between the percentage of those in rural areas and those in suburban areas or towns (8 and 11 percent, respectively).

In 2019, the percentages of 5- to 17-year-olds in kindergarten through 12th grade whose parents or

guardians had earned a bachelor's degree or completed some graduate school or who had earned a graduate or professional degree as their highest level of education differed by locale. For example, a lower percentage of those in rural areas (26 percent) had parents or guardians who had earned a bachelor's degree or completed some graduate school as their highest level of education than did those in suburban areas (30 percent). However, a higher percentage of those in rural areas (26 percent) had parents or guardians who had earned a bachelor's degree or completed some graduate school as their highest level of education than did those in towns (21 percent).

Figure 3. Percentage distribution of students ages 5 through 17 in kindergarten through grade 12, by locale and family structure: 2019



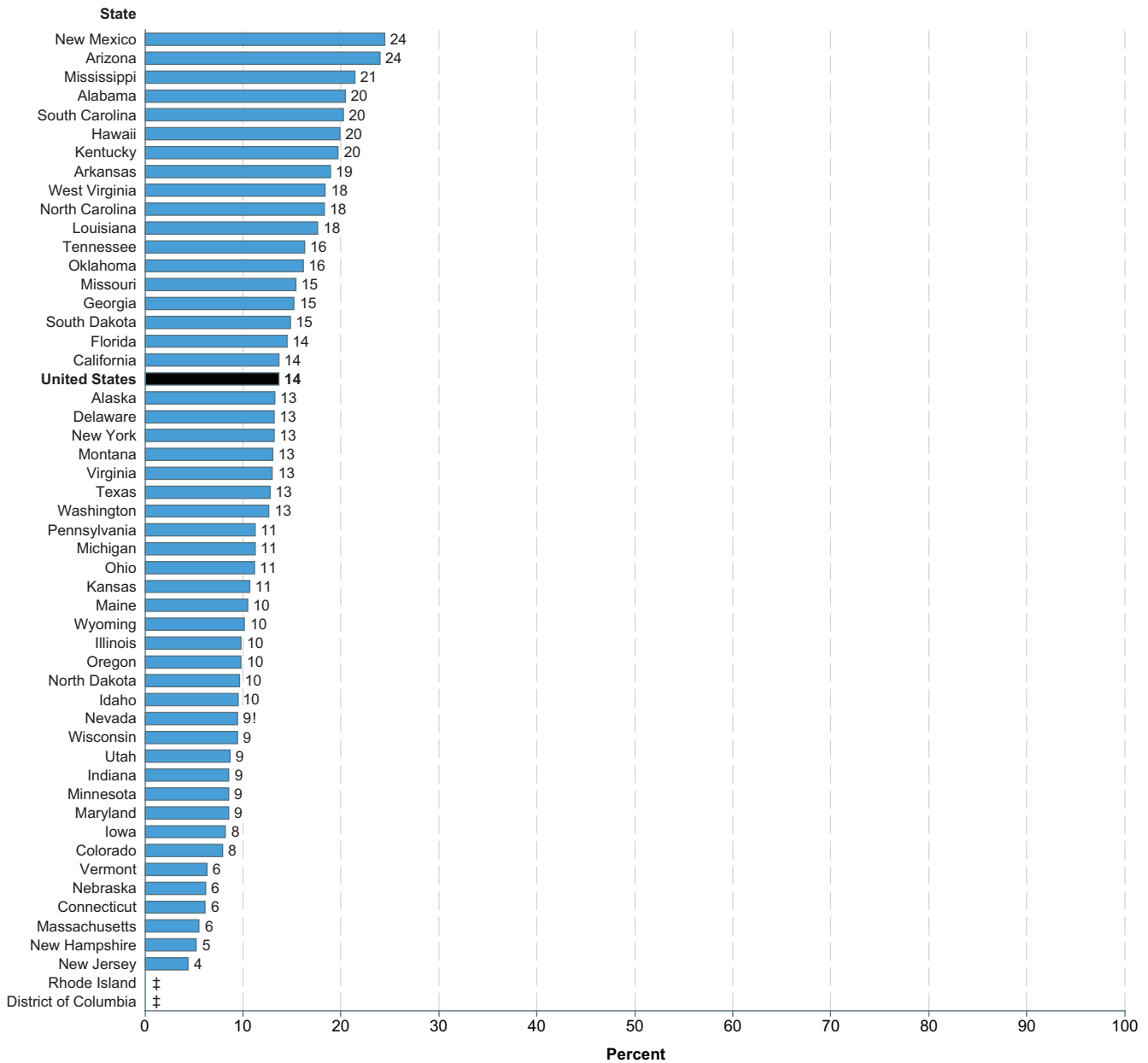
NOTE: Includes homeschooled students. Nonparental guardians are persons other than mothers and fathers (birth, adoptive, step, or foster, and same-sex parents or partners of parents), such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, or close family friends. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. Please visit NCES's [Education Across America website](#) for the definition of locale. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey of the National Household Education Surveys Program (PFI-NHES:2019). See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 102.90.

Research suggests that, compared to children with other family structures, children living in single-parent households are more likely to have poorer educational outcomes, including repeating grades and not being engaged in school.^{11, 12} In 2019, the percentage of 5- to 17-year-olds in kindergarten through 12th grade who resided with two parents in the household was higher for those living in rural areas (76 percent) than for those living in cities and towns (66 and 67 percent, respectively). However, there was no measurable difference between the percentage of those in suburban areas who lived with two parents and the percentage in rural areas who did so. The percentage of those who resided with one parent in the household was lower in rural areas (18 percent) than

in suburban areas (23 percent), towns (29 percent), and cities (31 percent). The percentage of those residing in the household with nonparental guardians¹³ was higher in rural areas (5 percent) than in suburban areas and cities (3 percent each).

Living in poverty during childhood is associated with lower-than-average academic performance.^{14, 15} Nationally, 14 percent of related children¹⁶ ages 5 to 17 in rural areas were living in poverty in 2019. This poverty rate for children in rural areas was higher than this poverty rate in suburban areas (12 percent) but lower than this poverty rate in towns and cities (21 percent each).

Figure 4. Percentage of related children ages 5 to 17 in rural areas living in poverty, by state: 2019



! Interpret data with caution. The coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent.
 ‡ Reporting standards not met. Either there are too few cases for a reliable estimate, the type of locale does not exist within the state or jurisdiction, or the coefficient of variation (CV) is 50 percent or greater.
 NOTE: Includes only 5- to 17-year-old related children. Related children include all children who live in a household and 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. Excludes unrelated children and householders who are themselves under the age of 18. Poverty status is determined by the Census Bureau using a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition. For additional information about poverty status, see <https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/poverty/guidance/poverty-measures.html>. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data. Please visit NCES's [Education Across America](#) website for the definition of locale.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey Education Tabulation (ACS-ED), 2019, Custom Tabulated Data File. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 102.45.

Data for the percentage of children in rural areas who were living in poverty in 2019 are available for 49 states. For these states, the percentages of related children in rural areas living in poverty ranged from 4 percent in New Jersey to 24 percent in Arizona and New Mexico. The states with the highest percentages of children in rural poverty were concentrated in the West (e.g., New Mexico and Arizona) and the South (e.g., Mississippi and Alabama), while the states with the lowest percentages of children in rural poverty were concentrated in the Northeast (e.g., Massachusetts and New Hampshire).

Data for the percentage of children in remote rural areas who were living in poverty in 2019 are available at the state level for 43 states. For these states, the percentages of children in remote rural areas living in poverty ranged from 6 percent in Vermont to 42 percent in Arizona. Similar to the states with the highest percentages of children living in poverty in rural areas overall, the states with the highest percentages of children in poverty in remote rural areas were concentrated in the West (e.g., Arizona and New Mexico) and the South (e.g., South Carolina and Georgia).

Endnotes:

¹ Hanushek, E.A., Kain, J.F., and Rivkin, S.G. (2009). New Evidence About Brown v. Board of Education: The Complex Effects of School Racial Composition on Achievement. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 27(3), 349-383. Retrieved September 22, 2022, from <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/600386?journalCode=jole>.

² Mickelson, R.A., Bottia, M.C., and Lambert, R. (2013). Effects of School Racial Composition on K-12 Mathematics Outcomes: A Metaregression Analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, 83(1), 121-158. Retrieved September 22, 2022, from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.3102/0034654312475322>.

³ 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>.

⁴ Radel, L., Bramlett, M., Chow, K., and Waters, A. (2016). Children Living Apart From Their Parents: Highlights From the National Survey of Children in Nonparental Care. Retrieved July 19, 2022, from https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/migrated_legacy_files/146232/NSCNC.pdf.

⁵ 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>.

⁶ Brooks-Gunn, J., and Duncan, G.J. (1997). The Effects of Poverty on Children and Youth. *The Future of Children*, 7(2): 55-71. Retrieved June 24, 2022, from <https://doi.org/10.2307/1602387>.

⁷ Misty, L., and Laura, D.T. (2011). The Effects of Poverty on Academic Achievement. *Educational Research and Reviews*, 6(7): 522-527. Retrieved October 14, 2022, from https://academicjournals.org/article/article1379765941_Lacour%20and%20Tissington.pdf.

⁸ Please visit NCES's [Education Across America website](#) for the definition of locale.

⁹ Although both round to 7 percent, the unrounded percentage of students who were Black in fringe towns was higher than the unrounded percentage of students who were Black in distant rural areas (6.9 vs. 6.8 percent).

¹⁰ 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>.

¹¹ Radel, L., Bramlett, M., Chow, K., and Waters, A. (2016). Children Living Apart From Their Parents: Highlights From the National Survey of Children in Nonparental Care. Retrieved July 19, 2022, from https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/migrated_legacy_files/146232/NSCNC.pdf.

¹² 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>.

¹³ Nonparental guardians are persons other than mothers and fathers (birth, adoptive, step, or foster, and same-sex parents or partners of parents), such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, or close family friends.

¹⁴ Brooks-Gunn, J., Duncan, G.J. (1997). The Effects of Poverty on Children and Youth. *The Future of Children*, 7(2): 55-71. Retrieved June 24, 2022, from <https://doi.org/10.2307/1602387>.

¹⁵ Misty, L., and Laura, D.T. (2011). The Effects of Poverty on Academic Achievement. *Educational Research and Reviews*, 6(7): 522-527. Retrieved October 14, 2022, from https://academicjournals.org/article/article1379765941_Lacour%20and%20Tissington.pdf.

¹⁶ Related children include all children who live in a household and 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.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, tables 214.40 and 102.90; *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 102.45

Related indicators and resources: [Characteristics of Children's Families](#) [*Condition of Education*]

Glossary: Bachelor's degree; Educational attainment; Elementary school; Geographic region; High school completer; High school diploma; Household; Locale codes; Poverty (official measure); Public school or institution; Racial/ethnic groups; Secondary/High school