

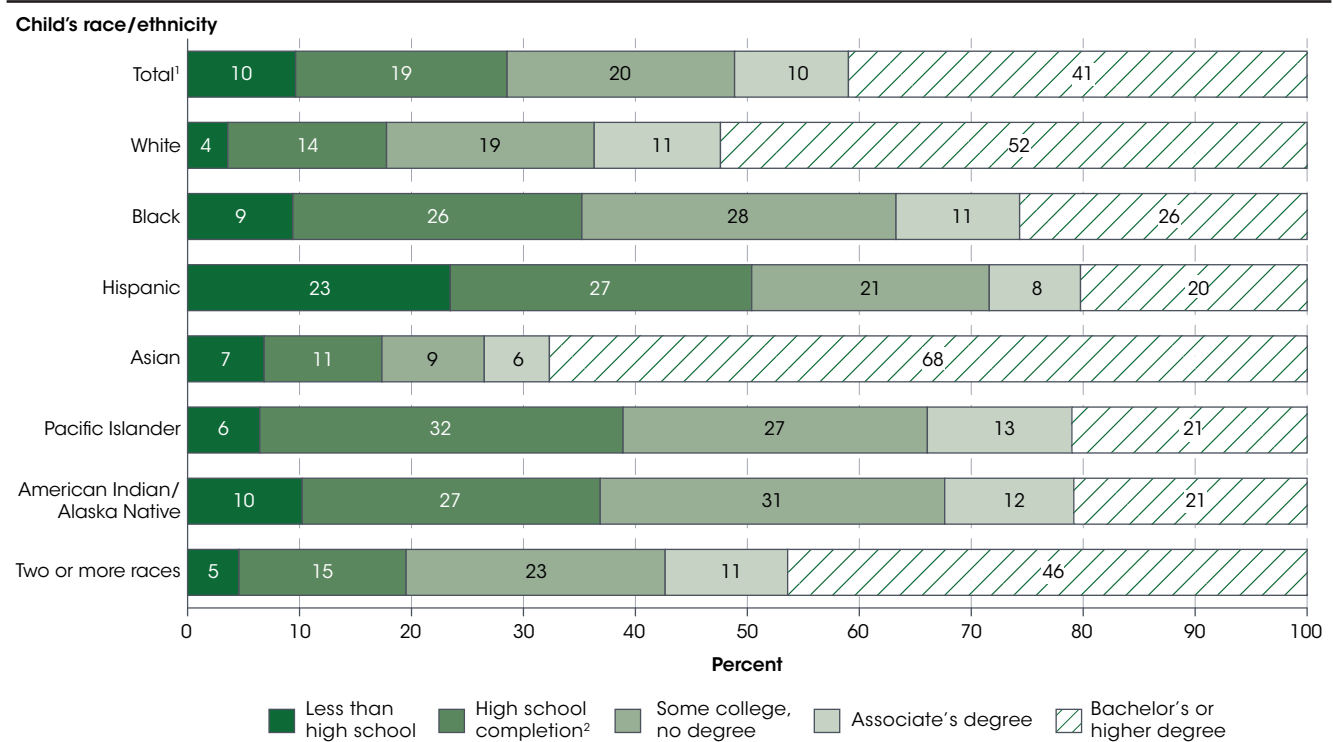
Characteristics of Children’s Families

In 2017, some 10 percent of children under the age of 18 lived in households without a parent who had completed high school, 26 percent lived in mother-only households, 8 percent lived in father-only households, and 18 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} In 2017, some 10 percent of children under the age of 18 lived in households without a parent who had completed high school,³

26 percent lived in mother-only households, 8 percent lived in father-only households, and 18 percent were in families living in poverty. 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, please 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, for each racial and ethnic group, by parents’ highest level of educational attainment: 2017



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. 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), 2017. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, table 104.70.

In 2017, 10 percent of children under age 18 lived in households without a parent who had completed high school, 19 percent lived in households where the highest level of education attained by either parent was high school completion,⁴ 20 percent lived in households where the highest level of education attained by either parent was some college attendance but no degree, and 10 percent lived in households where the highest level of education attained by either parent was an associate's degree. Some 41 percent of children lived in households where at least one parent's highest level of educational attainment was a bachelor's or higher degree: 22 percent lived in households where the highest level of education attained by either parent was a bachelor's degree, 13 percent lived in households where the highest level of education attained by either parent was a master's degree, and 6 percent lived in households where the highest level of education attained by either parent was a doctor's degree.⁵

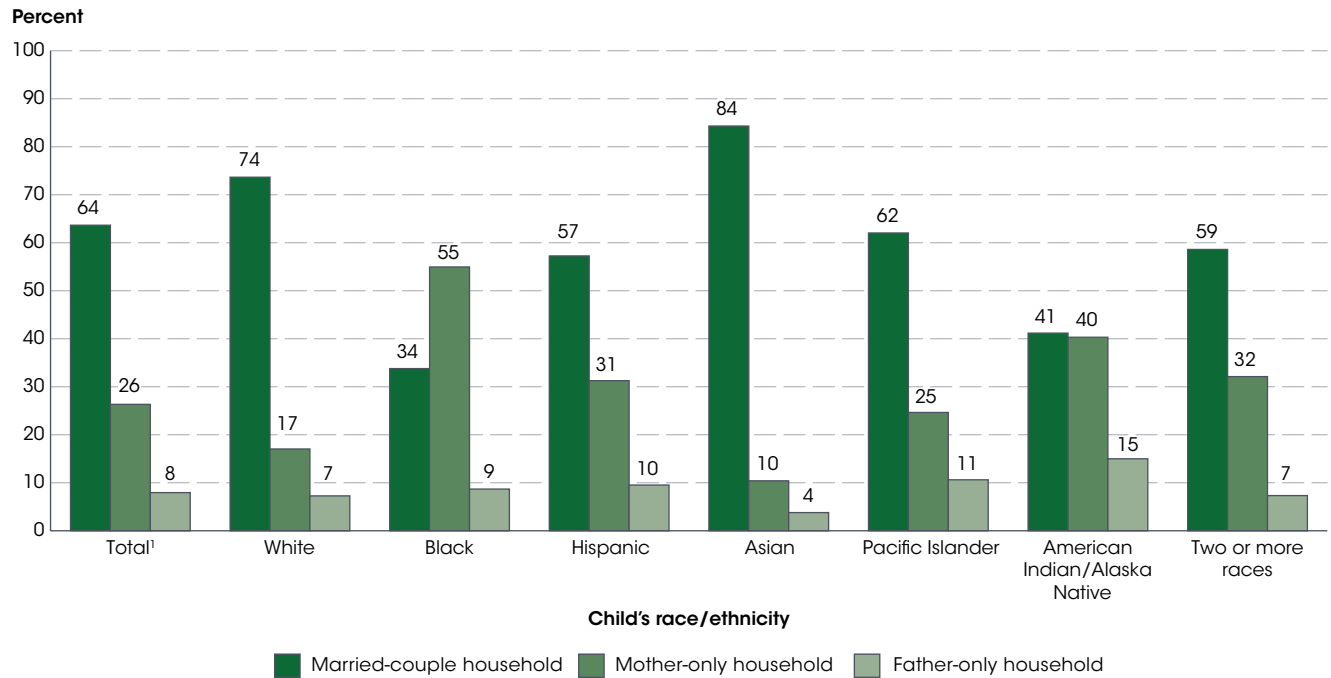
Lower percentages of children under age 18 in 2017 than in 2010 lived in households without a parent who had completed high school (10 vs. 12 percent), in households where the highest level of education attained by either parent was high school completion (19 vs. 20 percent), and in households where the highest level of education attained by either parent was some college attendance but no degree (20 vs. 23 percent). Meanwhile, a higher

percentage of children in 2017 than in 2010 lived in households where the highest level of education attained by either parent was a bachelor's or higher degree (41 vs. 35 percent).⁶

The percentage distribution of children under age 18 by the highest level of education either parent in their household attained varied across racial/ethnic groups in 2017. For example, the percentage of children with at least one parent who completed a bachelor's or higher degree was highest for Asian children (68 percent), followed by children who were White (52 percent) and of Two or more races (46 percent), and lowest for those who were Black (26 percent), Pacific Islander (21 percent), American Indian/Alaska Native (21 percent), and Hispanic (20 percent).

In contrast, in 2017 the percentage of children under age 18 who lived in households without a parent who had completed high school was higher for Hispanic children (23 percent) than for children who were American Indian/Alaska Native (10 percent), Black (9 percent), Asian (7 percent), Pacific Islander (6 percent), of Two or more races (5 percent), and White (4 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 groups.

Figure 2. Percentage of children under age 18, by child’s race/ethnicity and family structure: 2017

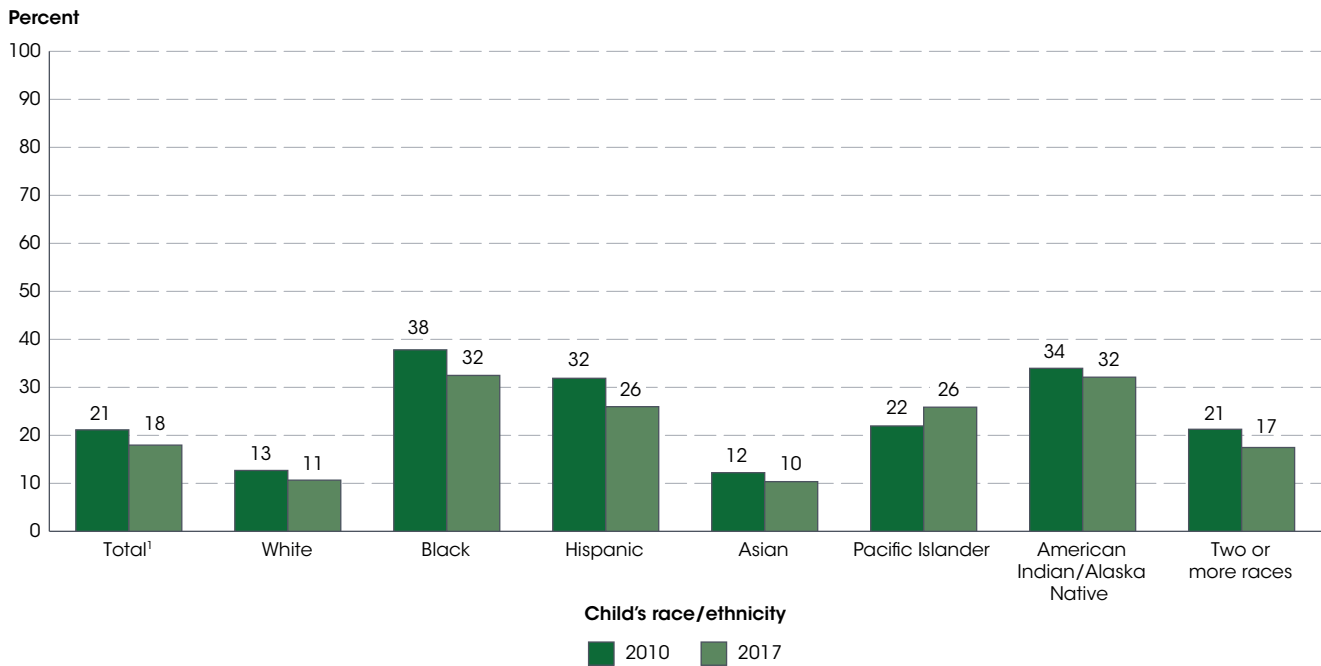


¹ Includes respondents who wrote in some other race that was not included as an option on the questionnaire.
NOTE: Data do not include foster children, children in unrelated subfamilies, children living in group quarters, and children who were reported as the householder or spouse of the householder. A "mother-only household" has a female householder, with no spouse present (i.e., the householder is unmarried or 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. 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), 2017. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, table 102.20.

In 2017, some 64 percent of children under age 18 lived in married-couple households, 26 percent lived in mother-only households, and 8 percent lived in father-only households.⁷ This pattern of a higher percentage of children living in married-couple households than in mother- and father-only households was seen for children across all racial/ethnic groups, except for Black children and American Indian/Alaska Native children. Some 55 percent of Black children lived in mother-only

households, compared with 34 percent who lived in married-couple households and 9 percent who lived in father-only households. Among American Indian/Alaska Native children, the percentage who lived in married-couple households (41 percent) was not measurably different from the percentage who lived in mother-only households (40 percent), though both percentages were higher than the percentage who lived in father-only households (15 percent).

Figure 3. Percentage of children under age 18 in families living in poverty, by child’s race/ethnicity: 2010 and 2017



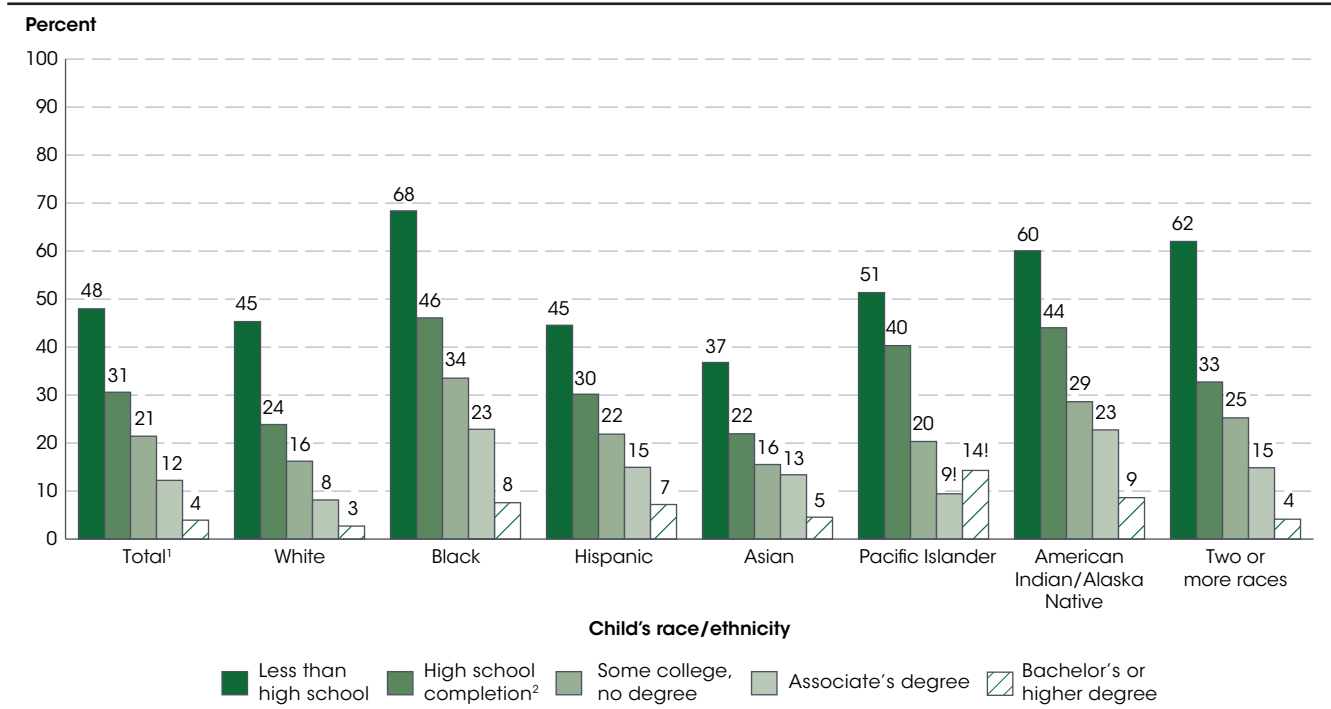
¹ Includes respondents who wrote in some other race that was not included as an option on the questionnaire.
 NOTE: The measure of child poverty includes all children who are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption (except a child who is the spouse of the householder). The householder 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 2017. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, table 102.60.

In 2017, approximately 12.9 million children under age 18 were in families living in poverty.⁸ The poverty rate for children in 2017 (18 percent) was lower than in 2010 (21 percent). This pattern was observed for children who were White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, and of Two or more races. For example, 26 percent of Hispanic children lived in poverty in 2017, compared with 32 percent in 2010. The 2017 poverty rates for American Indian/Alaska Native and Pacific Islander children were not measurably different from the rates in 2010.

The poverty rate for children under age 18 varied across racial/ethnic groups. In 2017, the poverty rates were highest for Black and American Indian/Alaska Native children (32 percent each), followed by Hispanic and

Pacific Islander children (26 percent each). Additionally, the rate for children of Two or more races (17 percent) was higher than the rates for White (11 percent) and Asian (10 percent) children. Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, Hispanic, and Pacific Islander children had poverty rates higher than the national average (18 percent), while White and Asian children had rates lower than the national average. The poverty rate for children of Two or more races was 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 4. Percentage of children under age 18 in families living in poverty, by child’s race/ethnicity and parents’ highest level of educational attainment: 2017



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

² Includes respondents who wrote in some other race that was not included as an option on the questionnaire.

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

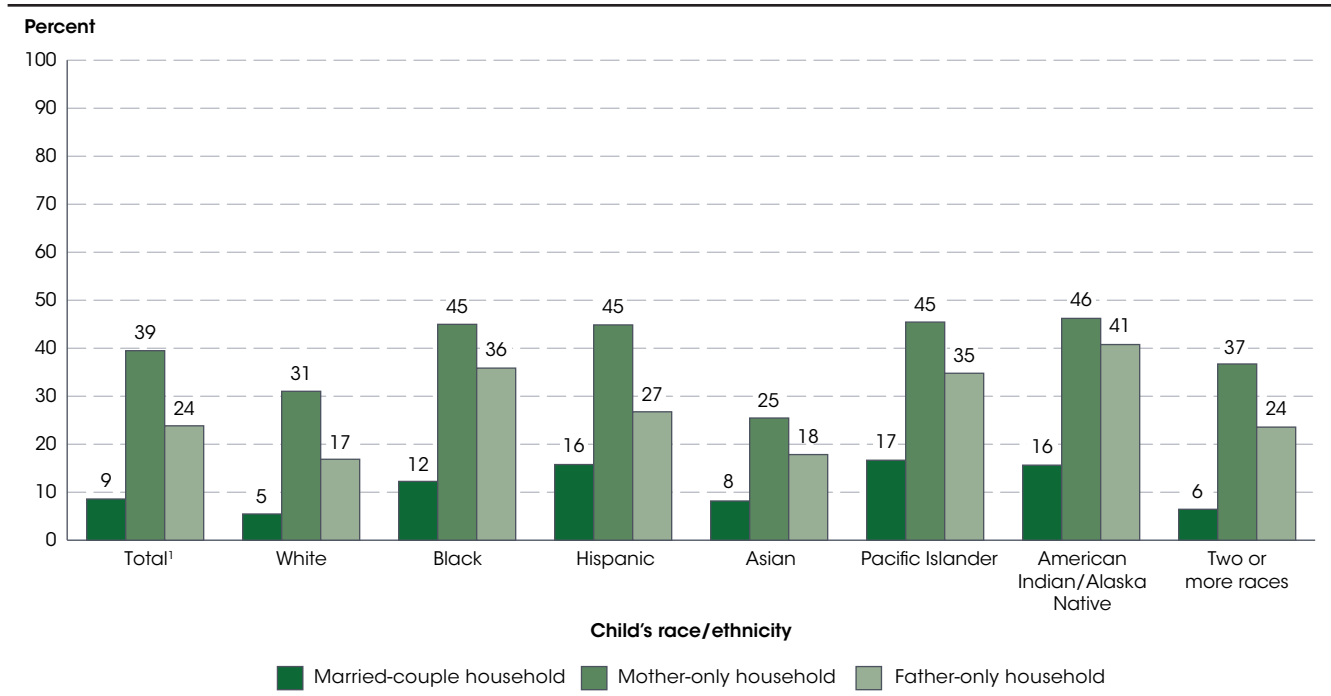
NOTE: Includes only children under age 18 who resided with at least one of their parents (including an adoptive or stepparent; excluding a foster parent). Parents’ highest level of educational attainment is the highest level of education attained by any parent residing in the same household as the child. 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), 2017. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, table 102.62.

In 2017, the poverty rate for children under age 18 was highest for those in households without a parent who had completed high school and lowest for those in households where at least one parent attained a bachelor’s or higher degree, both overall (48 vs. 4 percent) and within most racial/ethnic groups. For example, the poverty rate

among American Indian/Alaska Native children was highest for those in households without a parent who had completed high school (60 percent) and lowest for those in households where at least one parent attained a bachelor’s or higher degree (9 percent).

Figure 5. Percentage of children under age 18 in families living in poverty, by child’s race/ethnicity and family structure: 2017

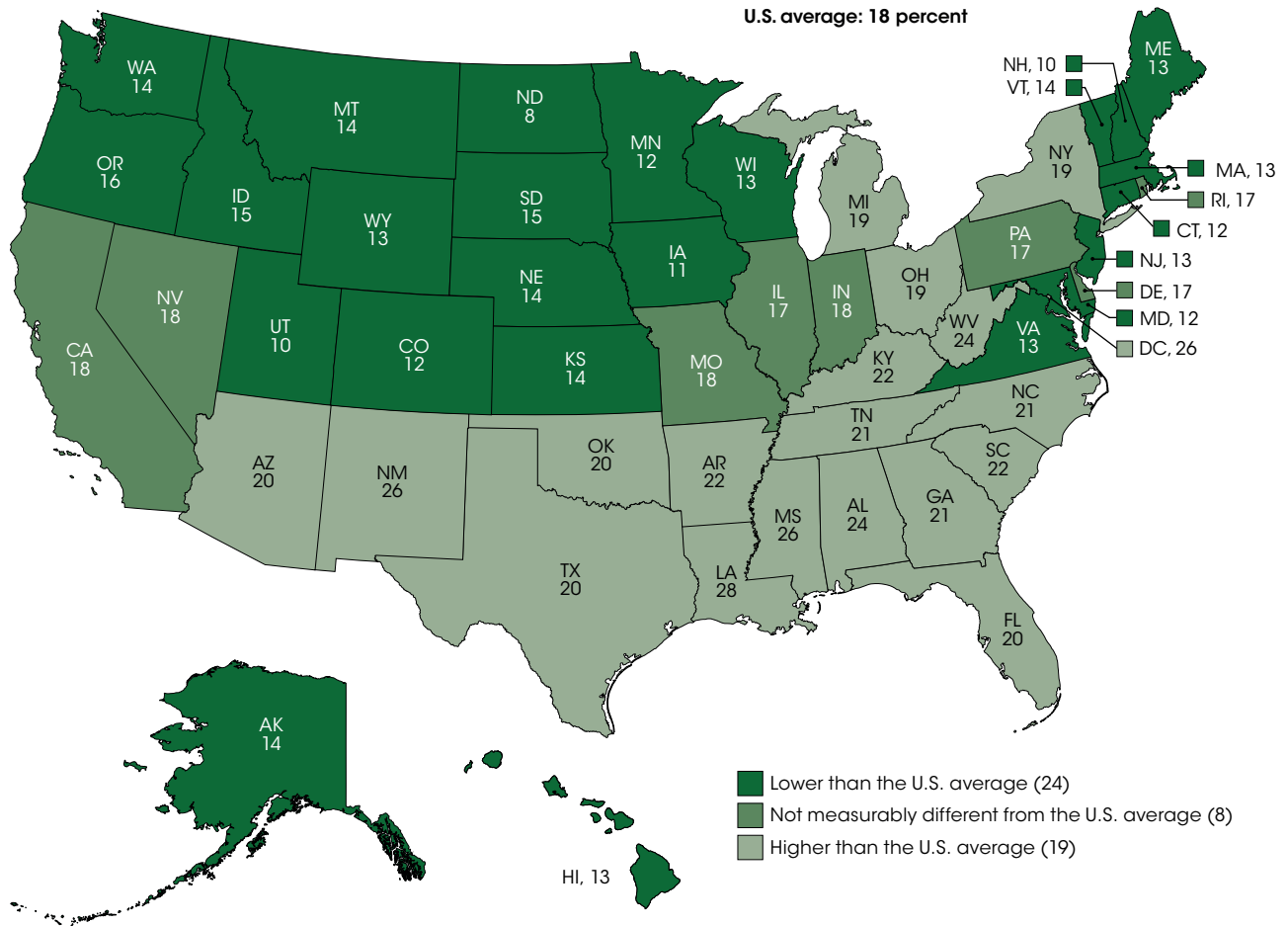


¹ Includes respondents who wrote in some other race that was not included as an option on the questionnaire.
 NOTE: A “mother-only household” has a female householder, with no spouse present (i.e., the householder is unmarried or their spouse is not in the household), while a “father-only household” 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), 2017. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, table 102.60.

In 2017, the poverty rate for children under age 18 was highest for those living in mother-only households (39 percent), followed by those living in father-only households (24 percent). Children living in married-couple households had the lowest poverty rate (9 percent). This pattern of children living in married-couple

households having the lowest poverty rate was generally observed across racial/ethnic groups. For example, among Black children, the poverty rates were 45 percent for those living in mother-only households, 36 percent for those living in father-only households, and 12 percent for those living in married-couple households.

Figure 6. Percentage of children under age 18 in families living in poverty, by state: 2017



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), 2017. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, table 102.40.

While the national average poverty rate for children under age 18 was 18 percent in 2017, the poverty rates among states ranged from 8 percent in North Dakota to 28 percent in Louisiana. Twenty-four states had poverty rates for children that were lower than the national average, 18 states and the District of Columbia had rates that were higher than the national average, and 8 states had rates that were not measurably different from the

national average. Of the 19 jurisdictions (18 states and the District of Columbia) that had poverty rates higher than the national average, the majority (14) were located in the South. In 35 states, the poverty rates were lower in 2017 than in 2010. In the remaining 15 states and the District of Columbia, there was no measurable difference between the poverty rates in 2010 and 2017.

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 11, 2019, 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 11, 2019, from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2012046>.

³ In this indicator, “parents’ highest level of educational attainment” is the highest level of education attained by either parent residing in the same household as the child.

⁴ Includes parents who completed high school through equivalency programs, such as a GED program.

⁵ Includes parents who had completed professional degrees.

⁶ Although the percentage of children living in households where the highest level of education attained by either parent was an associate’s degree was also higher in 2017 than in 2010 (10.2 vs. 9.7 percent), both percentages round to 10 percent.

⁷ 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. 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.

⁸ 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 2017, the poverty threshold for a family of four with two related children under 18 years old was \$24,858. For a more detailed breakdown of the 2017 poverty rate, refer to [this table](#).

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, 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