



## Basic Facts About Low-Income Children: Birth to Age 18

SEPTEMBER 2006

For comparable information about infants and toddlers, see *Basic Facts About Low-Income Children: Birth to Age 3*, or about young children, see *Basic Facts About Low-Income Children: Birth to Age 6*. This fact sheet includes children who live apart from both parents (for example, foster children or children being raised by grandparents). Previous versions of this fact sheet counted children living apart from parents differently; therefore, comparisons with versions published prior to September 2006 are not valid.

### What is the federal poverty level (FPL) in 2006?<sup>1</sup>

- \$20,000 for a family of 4.
- \$16,600 for a family of 3.
- \$13,200 for a family of 2.

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

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

- \$40,000 for a family of 4.
- \$33,200 for a family of 3.
- \$26,400 for a family of 2.

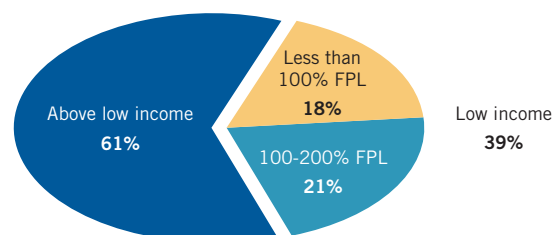
These figures approximate the average minimum income families need to make ends meet, but actual expenses vary greatly by locality. For a family of 4, the cost of basic family expenses is about \$36,000 per year in Houston, \$40,000 in Chicago, and \$49,000 in Hartford.<sup>3</sup>

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

There are 73 million children in the United States.

- 39%—28.4 million—live in low-income families.
- 18%—12.8 million—live in poor families.

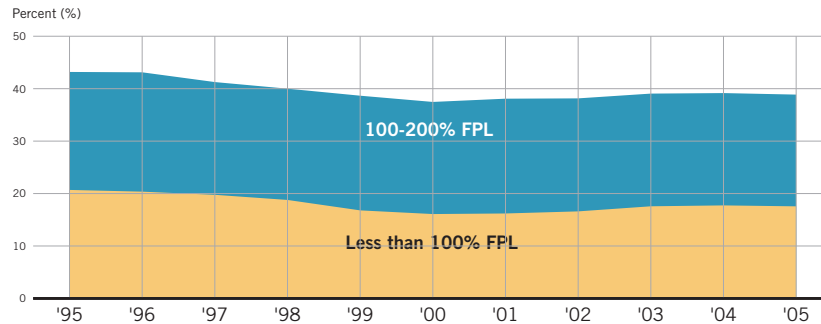
#### Children by family income, 2005



## Have these numbers changed over time?

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

### Children living in low-income families, 1995-2005



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

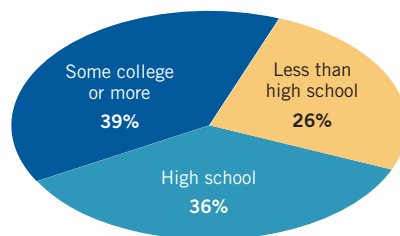
### Parents' Employment

- 55% of children in low-income families—15.6 million—have at least one parent who works full-time, year-round.
- 26% of children in low-income families—7.3 million—have at least one parent who works part-time or full-time, part-year.
- 19% of children in low-income families—5.5 million—do not have an employed parent.

### Parents' Education

- 26% of children in low-income families—7.3 million—live with parents who have less than a high school education.
- 36% of children in low-income families—10.2 million—live with parents who have only a high school diploma.
- 39% of children in low-income families—10.9 million—live with parents who have some college or more.

### Children living in low-income families, by parents' education level, 2005



Because of rounding, figures may not add up to 100%.

### Family Structure

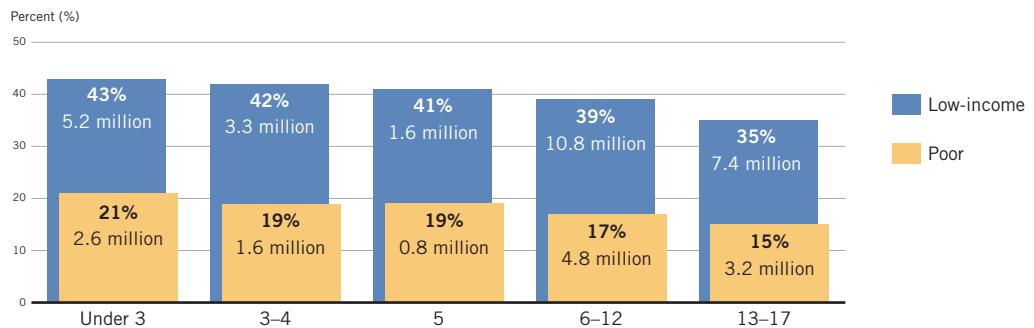
- 51% of children in low-income families—14.6 million—live with a single parent.
- 49% of children in low-income families—13.8 million—live with married parents.

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

Young children are disproportionately low income. 42% of children under age 6—more than 10 million—live in low-income families.

- 43% of children under age 3 years—5.2 million—live in low-income families.
- 42% of children ages 3 and 4 years—3.3 million—live in low-income families.
- 41% of children age 5 years—1.6 million—live in low-income families.
- 39% of children ages 6 through 12 years—10.8 million—live in low-income families.
- 35% of children ages 13 through 17 years—7.4 million—live in low-income families.

**Children living in low-income and poor families, by age group, 2005**

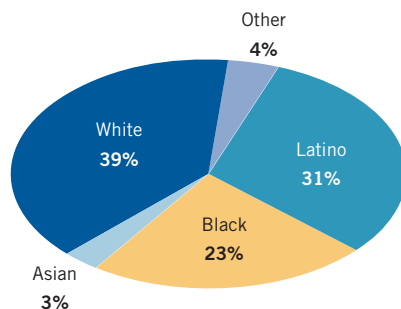


### Does the percent of children in low-income families vary by race/ethnicity?

- 61% of Latino children—8.8 million—live in low-income families.
- 61% of black children—6.5 million—live in low-income families.
- 28% of Asian children—0.8 million—live in low-income families.
- 26% of white children—11.1 million—live in low-income families.

Although Latino and black children are disproportionately low income, whites comprise the largest group of low-income children.

**Children living in low-income families, by race/ethnicity, 2005**



### Does the percent of children in low-income families vary by parents' country of birth?<sup>4</sup>

- 57% of children of immigrant parents—7.0 million—live in low-income families.
- 36% of children of native-born parents—20.4 million—live in low-income families.

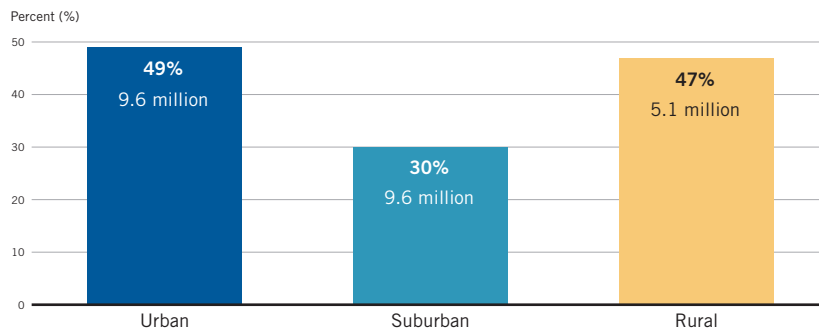
## Does the percent of children in low-income families vary by where children live?

### Region

- 42% of children in the South—11.2 million—live in low-income families.
- 40% of children in the West—7.2 million—live in low-income families.
- 34% of children in the Northeast—4.3 million—live in low-income families.
- 35% of children in the Midwest—5.7 million—live in low-income families.

### Type of Area

#### Children living in low-income families, in urban, suburban, and rural areas, 2005



### Residential Instability

- 21% of children in low-income families—5.9 million—moved in the last year.
- 10% of children in above low-income families—4.4 million—moved last year.

## Endnotes

*This fact sheet is part of the National Center for Children in Poverty's demographic fact sheet series and is updated annually. Estimates, unless otherwise noted, were prepared by Ayana Douglas-Hall, Michelle Chau, and Heather Koball of NCCP based on the U.S. Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, March 2006. Estimates include children living in households with at least one parent and most children living apart from both parents (for example, children being raised by grandparents). Children living independently, living with a spouse, or in group quarters are excluded from these data. Children ages 14 and under living with only unrelated adults were not included because data on their income status were not available. Among children who do not live with at least one parent, parental characteristics are those of the householder and/or the householder's spouse. Previous versions of this fact sheet counted children living apart from parents differently; therefore, comparisons with versions published prior to September 2006 are not valid.*

1. These numbers are from the federal poverty guidelines issued annually by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The demographic findings in this fact sheet were calculated using more complex versions of the federal poverty measure—the thresholds issued by the U.S. Census Bureau. For more information on measuring poverty, see NCCP's state profiles and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services <[aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/06poverty.shtml](http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/06poverty.shtml)>.

2. Berstein, J.; Brocht, C.; & Spade-Aguilar, M. (2000). *How much is enough? Basic family budgets for working families*. Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute.

3. These figures were derived from NCCP's Family Resource Simulator <[www.nccp.org/modeler/modeler.cgi?page=sim\\_1](http://www.nccp.org/modeler/modeler.cgi?page=sim_1)>.

4. Approximately 1 million low-income children ages birth to 18 live in households with one immigrant parent and one native-born parent. Those children are not counted in this figure.

For state-level demographic data, see the National Center for Children in Poverty web site:

[www.nccp.org](http://www.nccp.org).