



DATA SNAPSHOT ON HIGH-POVERTY COMMUNITIES

CHILDREN LIVING IN AMERICA'S HIGH-POVERTY COMMUNITIES FEBRUARY 2012

All children need strong families and supportive communities to realize their full potential. For the nearly 8 million children under age 18 living in areas of concentrated poverty (see box below for a complete description) in the United States, critical resources for their healthy growth and development – including high-performing schools, quality medical care and safe outdoor spaces – are often out of reach. The chance that a child will live in an area of concentrated poverty has grown significantly over the last decade. In fact, the latest data available show that the number of children living in these communities has risen by 1.6 million, a 25 percent increase since 2000.

HOW LIVING IN CONCENTRATED POVERTY IS HARMFUL FOR CHILDREN

Every child needs a supportive environment to ensure his or her healthy growth and development. However, research has shown that even when family income is held constant, families living in areas of concentrated poverty are more likely to struggle to meet their children's basic material needs. They are more likely to face food hardship, have trouble paying their housing costs, and lack health insurance than those living in more affluent areas. Children living in areas of concentrated poverty are also more likely to experience harmful levels of stress and severe behavioral and emotional problems than children overall.¹

These problems can affect a child's ability to succeed in school. In fact, students in predominately low-income schools have lower test

scores than those who attend predominately higher-income schools, regardless of their family's income. They are also more likely to drop out.² In addition, growing up in a high-poverty neighborhood undermines a child's chances of adult economic success. Studies have shown that for children in middle- and upper-income families, living in a high-poverty neighborhood raises the chances of falling down the income ladder as an adult by 52 percent, on average.³

CONCENTRATED POVERTY ON THE RISE

The most recent data available from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey show that after declining between 1990 and 2000, both the percent and the number of children living in high-poverty areas increased over the last decade. The 2006-10 five-year estimates produced by the American Community Survey replaced the decennial census for many data points and are the most recent data available to estimate concentrated poverty at the census-tract level. Estimates from 2006 through 2010 suggest that 7,879,000 children lived in areas of concentrated poverty. The percent of children living in these areas increased from 9 to 11 percent over the past decade.

Nearly one out of three children (29 percent) in families with incomes below the poverty line live in areas of concentrated poverty but not all children in these communities are poor. In fact, of the nearly 8 million children living in these areas, almost half (3,625,700) are in families with incomes above the poverty line. In addition, most parents living in these communities work. Nearly three out of four (74 percent) children living in areas of concentrated poverty have at least one parent in the labor force.

Not all children are equally likely to live in areas of concentrated poverty. African-American, American Indian, and Latino children are between six and nine times more likely than white children to live in these communities. Children with parents who are born outside the United States (14 percent) are also more likely than

DEFINING CONCENTRATED POVERTY AREAS

Research indicates that as neighborhood poverty rates increase, undesirable outcomes rise and opportunities for success are less likely. The effects of concentrated poverty begin to appear once neighborhood poverty rates rise above 20 percent and continue to grow as the concentration of poverty increases up to the 40 percent threshold.⁴ This report defines areas of concentrated poverty as those census tracts with poverty rates of 30 percent or more because it is a commonly used threshold that lies between the starting point and leveling off point for negative neighborhood effects. The 2010 federal poverty threshold is \$22,314 per year for a family of four.



Photographer: Carol Highsmith

those with U.S.-born parents (9 percent) to live in areas of concentrated poverty. These figures highlight the double jeopardy faced by economically disadvantaged children of color in the United States. African-American, American Indian, and Latino children who live in households with incomes below the poverty threshold are significantly more likely than white children to have the adverse consequences of living in a high-poverty neighborhood compound the negative effects of household poverty.

VARIATION BY LOCATION

While two-thirds of children living in areas of concentrated poverty are in large cities, millions live outside urban areas in suburbs and rural communities. Overall, children living in rural areas (10 percent) and large cities (22 percent) are considerably more likely than those in suburbs (4 percent) to live in a community of concentrated poverty. Among the country's 50 largest cities, Detroit (67 percent), Cleveland (57 percent), Miami (49 percent), Milwaukee (48 percent), Fresno (43 percent), and Atlanta (43 percent) have the highest rates of children living in areas of concentrated poverty.

Although there are pockets of concentrated poverty across the country, children in southern and southwestern states are most likely to live in these disadvantaged areas. The states with the highest rates are Mississippi (23 percent), New Mexico (20 percent), Louisiana (18 percent), Texas (17 percent) and Arizona (16 percent). Most states saw an increase in the percentage of children living in concentrated poverty over the last decade. Only eight states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia experienced declines over this period.

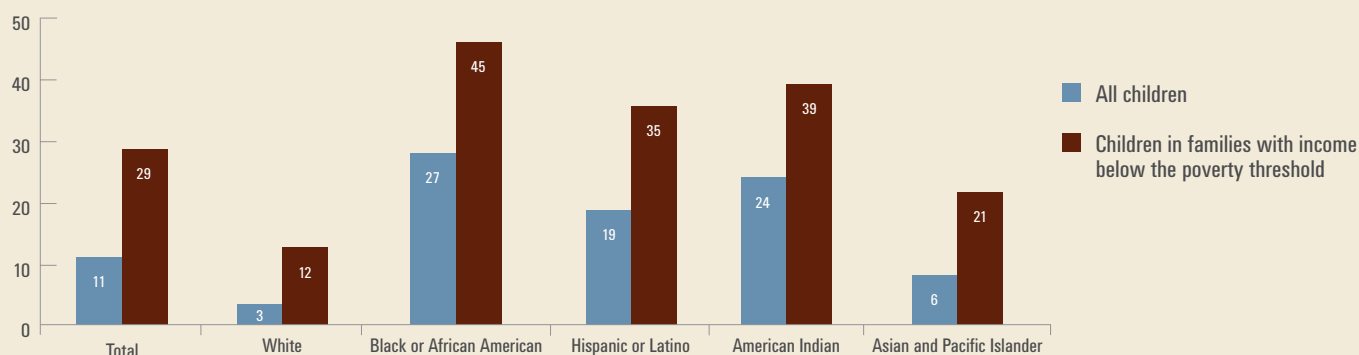
MOVING FORWARD

The prosperity of communities across America depends on their ability to foster the health and well-being of the next generation. A number of approaches can improve the chances of success for families in high-poverty communities – approaches that help make these areas better places to raise children, help families secure jobs

and access services beyond their neighborhoods and enable them to move to neighborhoods with better opportunities if they desire. Some promising practices include:

- *Promoting community change efforts that integrate physical revitalization with human capital development.* Ongoing public/private partnerships to develop mixed-income communities in Atlanta, Baltimore, New Orleans, and San Francisco are supported by federal programs such as the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative, as well as state and city partners, developers, business leaders, philanthropy, and residents themselves. These efforts combine investments in early childhood and education programs for children with workforce development and asset-building activities for parents to benefit both new and long-time residents.
- *Leveraging “anchor institutions” to build strong, supportive communities for children and families.* Universities, hospitals, and other “anchor institutions” can implement hiring and procurement policies that target parents and other adult residents of distressed communities, as exemplified by the Living Cities Integration Initiative partnerships in Baltimore, Cleveland, and Detroit. Universities can advance positive child outcomes by supporting high-performing neighborhood schools, as the University of Pennsylvania does for the Penn Alexander School in West Philadelphia. Higher education is also a key player in many of the U.S. Department of Education’s Promise Neighborhoods Initiative sites which are seeking to create cradle-to-career pipelines that improve opportunities for disadvantaged children.
- *Promoting proven and promising practices in the areas of work supports, asset building and employment.* Jobs Plus provides intensive, employment-focused programs targeting working-age public housing residents in seven cities. Through the Centers for Working Families in partnership with United Way, LISC, and community colleges, integrated delivery of education, employment training, work supports, financial coaching and asset building services have been shown to contribute to higher rates of economic

Percent of children living in areas where at least 30% of residents have incomes below the poverty threshold, by race, Hispanic origin, and family poverty level, 2006 – 2010.



Source: Population Reference Bureau’s analysis of data from the 2006 – 2010 American Community Survey. Note: Data for African American, American Indian and Asian Pacific Islander categories include those who are also Hispanic or Latino.

Children living in areas with 30% of residents or more living below the poverty threshold, 2000 and 2006 - 2010

LOCATION	2000		2006-2010		CHANGE FROM 2000 TO 2006-2010	
	NUMBER	PERCENT	NUMBER	PERCENT	NUMBER	PERCENT
United States	6,301,000	9%	7,879,000	11%	1,578,000	25%
Alabama	136,000	12%	151,000	13%	15,000	11%
Alaska	1,000	1%	5,000	3%	4,000	400%
Arizona	195,000	14%	253,000	16%	58,000	30%
Arkansas	61,000	9%	98,000	14%	37,000	61%
California	1,156,000	13%	1,049,000	11%	-107,000	-9%
Colorado	20,000	2%	92,000	8%	72,000	360%
Connecticut	46,000	6%	62,000	7%	16,000	35%
Delaware	7,000	4%	9,000	4%	2,000	29%
District of Columbia	37,000	33%	33,000	32%	-4,000	-11%
Florida	267,000	7%	341,000	9%	74,000	28%
Georgia	146,000	7%	264,000	11%	118,000	81%
Hawaii	6,000	2%	12,000	4%	6,000	100%
Idaho	4,000	1%	13,000	3%	9,000	225%
Illinois	262,000	8%	304,000	10%	42,000	16%
Indiana	48,000	3%	135,000	8%	87,000	181%
Iowa	11,000	2%	27,000	4%	16,000	145%
Kansas	14,000	2%	46,000	7%	32,000	229%
Kentucky	110,000	11%	132,000	13%	22,000	20%
Louisiana	264,000	22%	193,000	18%	-71,000	-27%
Maine	3,000	1%	8,000	3%	5,000	167%
Maryland	56,000	4%	43,000	3%	-13,000	-23%
Massachusetts	78,000	5%	100,000	7%	22,000	28%
Michigan	217,000	8%	341,000	14%	124,000	57%
Minnesota	35,000	3%	68,000	5%	33,000	94%
Mississippi	165,000	21%	177,000	23%	12,000	7%
Missouri	74,000	5%	123,000	9%	49,000	66%
Montana	17,000	8%	14,000	6%	-3,000	-18%
Nebraska	12,000	3%	27,000	6%	15,000	125%
Nevada	26,000	5%	41,000	6%	15,000	58%
New Hampshire	2,000	1%	5,000	2%	3,000	150%
New Jersey	103,000	5%	128,000	6%	25,000	24%
New Mexico	102,000	20%	100,000	20%	-2,000	-2%
New York	799,000	17%	674,000	15%	-125,000	-16%
North Carolina	76,000	4%	212,000	10%	136,000	179%
North Dakota	7,000	5%	11,000	7%	4,000	57%
Ohio	202,000	7%	324,000	12%	122,000	60%
Oklahoma	48,000	5%	98,000	11%	50,000	104%
Oregon	14,000	2%	42,000	5%	28,000	200%
Pennsylvania	235,000	8%	299,000	11%	64,000	27%
Rhode Island	35,000	14%	22,000	10%	-13,000	-37%
South Carolina	62,000	6%	133,000	12%	71,000	115%
South Dakota	21,000	11%	22,000	11%	1,000	5%
Tennessee	103,000	7%	197,000	13%	94,000	91%
Texas	785,000	13%	1,120,000	17%	335,000	43%
Utah	15,000	2%	27,000	3%	12,000	80%
Vermont *	200	< 5%	1,000	1%	800	400%
Virginia	60,000	3%	76,000	4%	16,000	27%
Washington	58,000	4%	87,000	6%	29,000	50%
West Virginia	28,000	7%	33,000	8%	5,000	18%
Wisconsin	70,000	5%	107,000	8%	37,000	53%
Wyoming	3,000	2%	1,000	1%	-2,000	-67%
Puerto Rico	978,000	90%	786,000	83%	-192,000	-20%

Source: Population Reference Bureau's analysis of data from the 2000 Decennial Census and the 2006-10 American Community Survey which replaced the 2010 decennial census for this indicator. Note: Estimates are subject to both sampling and nonsampling error. * Due to low number of events, 2000 data for Vermont was rounded to the nearest hundred.

success and stability. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development's Family Self-Sufficiency Program enables families to save for a down-payment on their own home.

- *Connecting neighborhood improvements to citywide and regional efforts.* Increasingly, families must look to the surrounding metropolitan region to access opportunities. In recent years, groups such as the Brookings Institution's Metropolitan Policy Program, have been working to advance greater regional coordination that links employment, affordable housing and transportation. Since 2010, the Partnership for Sustainable Communities, a joint effort of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Department of Transportation and the Environmental Protection Agency, has supported such efforts in 103 metropolitan regions across the country.
- *Increasing access to affordable housing in safe, opportunity-rich communities for low-income families, particularly families of color.* Strategies for achieving this goal include inclusionary zoning, tenant eligibility guidelines that prohibit discriminatory admission practices, marketing to attract a diverse applicant pool, and housing mobility programs for families with Section 8 vouchers. Evaluation of the federal Moving to Opportunity demonstration project has shown that assisting poor families in moving out of areas of concentrated poverty can deliver positive results for both children and adults.

RESOURCES

The KIDS COUNT Data Center includes new data on children living in areas of concentrated poverty. Data cover all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the 50 largest cities. These data can be used to create rankings, maps and graphs for use in publications and on websites. Find data where you live on the KIDS COUNT Data Center – ow.ly/8ZKS8.

Learn more about the latest research and policy developments related to families living in high poverty communities through the following resources:

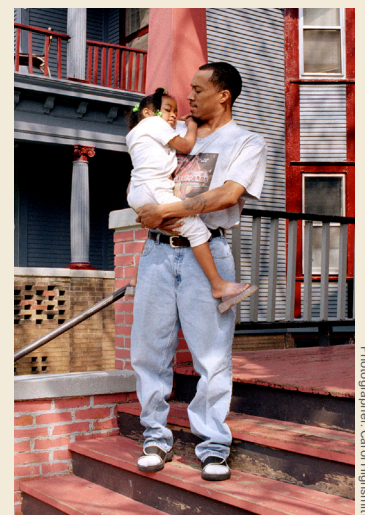
- The Annie E. Casey Foundation's Knowledge Center information on concentrated poverty: ow.ly/8Ygcc
- The Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program: www.brookings.edu/metro
- The Carsey Institute: www.carseyinstitute.unh.edu
- The East Baltimore Revitalization Initiative: www.eastbaltimorerevitalization.org
- Living Cities Integration Initiative: www.livingcities.org/integration
- The Partnership for Sustainable Communities: www.sustainablecommunities.gov
- The Poverty and Race Research Action Council: www.prrac.org
- United Neighborhood Centers of America: unca-acf.org
- The Urban Institute Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center: www.urban.org/center/met

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Turner, M.A. & Kaye, D.R. (2006). How Does Family Well-Being Vary Across Different Types of Neighborhoods? Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute.
- ² The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2010). Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters: A KIDS COUNT Special Report. Baltimore: The Annie E. Casey Foundation
- ³ Sharkley, P. (2009). Neighborhoods and the Black-White Mobility Gap. Washington, D.C.: The Pew Charitable Trusts.
- ⁴ Galster, G.C. (2012). The mechanism(s) of neighbourhood effects: Theory, evidence, and policy implications. In M. van Ham, D. Manley, N. Bailey, L. Simpson & D. Maclennan (Eds.), *Neighbourhood Effects Research: New Perspectives*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer. 23-56.

The KIDS COUNT Data Snapshot series highlights specific indicators of child well-being contained in the KIDS COUNT Data Center (datacenter.kidscount.org.) KIDS COUNT, a project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, is a national and state-by-state effort to track the status of children in the United States.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the United States. www.aecf.org



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