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minnesota

Too Many Children Continue to Live in Poverty in Minnesota

Overall Child Poverty Rate Holds Steady, but Significant Increases for Children of Color and American Indian Children are Found

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SAINT PAUL, Minnesota — Children remain the poorest age group in Minnesota with nearly 150,000—11.7 percent of all children—living in poverty in 2018, according to data released today by the U.S. Census Bureau. Still more than one in ten of Minnesota's children experience poverty, with children of color and American Indian children living in poverty at much higher rates than their white peers. Policies and programs that ensure that children's basic needs are met are crucial to address disparities in economic stability for children and families.

Historical policies and practices that have prevented people of color and American Indian people from having a fair start continues to be reflected in today's poverty rate disparities. Children of color and American Indian children make up 31 percent of Minnesota's child population. The newly released data paints a sobering reality for child poverty in these respective communities: 33.4 percent of Black children, 39.4 percent of American Indian children, 23.4 percent of Latino children, 16.5 percent of Asian children and 14.3 percent of children of two or more races were poor in Minnesota compared to 6.2 percent of White children. There was a decrease of 7.5% in the child poverty rate for African American children, though the Asian child poverty rate increased by 27.7% and the American Indian child poverty rate jumped by 26.5%. Additionally, the percentage of children under age 6 living in extreme poverty increased by 15.3%. Despite progress in some communities, we see the persistent outcome of systems that do not respond to the needs of all communities to address our deep disparities.

"I am not surprised by the increase in poverty rate for American Indian children, but of course I'm sad, because it is the reality I see every day," said Patina Park, President/CEO at [Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center](#). "But I am also hopeful because I see an enlightenment and willingness by more systems to be aware of the problem rather than ignoring it. That's new; our state and local government has come to a better understanding that poverty is not the fault of the family, and is more willing to find solutions to remedy the systemic problems facing communities. The silos between targeted resource pools have harmed our families. Separating housing needs from opioid addiction from out-of-home placement means an inability to see the big picture. The fact that poverty is so prevalent in the American Indian community reinforces

the fact that we need to develop a more systematic approach driven by an awareness of the issues facing our children and families. We don't have enough affordable housing or jobs paying living wages. We need to have a long-term, multigenerational response. This country has never had a resource problem; what it has is a priority problem and a system embedded in white supremacy. Until we address those issues, it is hard to get to the underlying issues affecting our families."

"The reason behind the increase in child poverty within the Asian and Pacific Islander (API) community is challenging to understand without disaggregated data by ethnicity. There are many API in the low income bracket that no one is paying attention to in Minnesota. Family economics dictate what happens to children and if parents and other caretakers are living in poverty, that has an effect on the children," said Bo Thao-Urabe, Executive and Network Director at [Coalition of Asian American Leaders](#).

The federal poverty level is defined as an annual income below \$25,750 for an average family of four, or less than \$2,146 a month or \$ 70.55 a day. Extreme poverty is half that level. Minnesota's Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) estimates that a living wage in Minnesota for two adult workers with two children to range from just over \$61,000 (about \$15 per hour per full-time worker) in southwest Minnesota to just under \$100,000 (about \$24 per hour per full-time worker) per year in metro area counties. DEED estimates that the median wage of available jobs for the first quarter of 2019 was \$20.95 per hour. With 150,000 children living in families with incomes far below a living wage, work support programs such as SNAP and Medical Assistance remain necessary for families to meet basic needs.

Children under age 18 living in poverty and state rank by race/ethnicity, 2018

Race/Ethnicity	Number	Rate	State Rank	Percent change, 2017-2018
White	54,191	6.2	5	-1.9
American Indian	7,267	39.4	34	26.5
Asian	11,845	16.5	35	27.7
Black	41,375	33.4	26	-7.5
Hispanic/Latino	26,508	23.4	16	-1.6
Two or More Races	12,454	14.3	12	-42.1
TOTAL	149,502	11.7	5	-0.8

Children Living in Concentrated Poverty

In addition to the American Community Survey data released by the U.S. Census Bureau, a new KIDS COUNT® data snapshot was released this week by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

"[Children Living in High Poverty, Low-Opportunity Neighborhoods](#)" uses the latest available data to examine where concentrated poverty has worsened across the country despite a long period of national economic expansion. The report finds that while the percentage of children living in

areas of concentrated poverty in Minnesota has declined slightly, the proportion of children of color and American Indian children living in these areas is still significantly higher than white children. In Minneapolis, the percentage of children in areas of concentrated poverty dropped from 38% in 2012 to 27% in 2017, while the overall number for the state dropped one percentage point during the same time frame to five percent.

The “Children Living in Concentrated Poverty, Low-Opportunity Neighborhoods” snapshot reflects the impact that racial oppression and discriminatory housing and economic practices have made on children in Minnesota. “With nearly 12 percent of Minnesota’s children living in poverty, and too many children continuing to live in neighborhoods with limited access to healthy foods, health care and community services to support their development, we must address systemic barriers that exist for families in our state, especially for our children of color and American Indian children” said Bharti Wahi, Executive Director of Children’s Defense Fund - Minnesota.

“Two-generation solutions that support working parents and increase children’s access to basic needs and opportunity are critical to improving child outcomes and beginning to address the systemic barriers that exist particularly for families of color and American Indian families,” said Wahi. “We need to continue building on recent investments in effective work support programs such as SNAP, WIC, Child Care Assistance and refundable tax credits, to expand access and ensure all children, and all of us, can benefit from the individual and community economic and social benefits they provide,” Wahi said. “Recent action such as the minimum wage increase, along with investments in child care and children’s health coverage are proven strategies to alleviate the effects of poverty and improve economic, academic and health outcomes for Minnesota children. To ensure a growing economy and productive workforce, Minnesota must continue to expand these and other programs that improve child outcomes.”

Children’s Defense Fund - Minnesota joins the Casey Foundation in calling on national, state and local stakeholders to act now to help families lift themselves out of these circumstances. Policies at the community, county and state level that can have a significant impact on the lives of children in struggling families include:

- Changing zoning laws that have favored single-family housing to allow for more multiunit properties.
- Supporting development and property-ownership models that preserve affordable housing, such as community land trusts and limited-equity cooperatives.
- Ending housing discrimination based on whether a person was formerly incarcerated or is using a federal housing voucher.
- Assisting low-income residents in paying higher property taxes that often come with new development/redevelopment or with a family’s relocation to a more affluent area.
- Expanding workforce training that is targeted to high-poverty, low-opportunity communities.

- Requiring and incentivizing anchor institutions to hire locally and contract with businesses owned by women and people of color.
- Developing and funding small-business loan programs that serve entrepreneurs in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color — or people that traditional lenders tend to reject, such as individuals with poor credit or criminal records.

About Children’s Defense Fund - Minnesota

The Children’s Defense Fund Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.

About the Annie E. Casey Foundation

The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a brighter future for the nation’s children by developing solutions to strengthen families, build paths to economic opportunity and transform struggling communities into safer and healthier places to live, work and grow. For more information, visit www.aecf.org. KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

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