



TAX & BUDGET

NATIONAL SNAPSHOT: POVERTY AMONG WOMEN & FAMILIES, 2018

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The U.S. Census Bureau data released in September 2018 shows that many families in the U.S. are experiencing some real economic gains. Despite this good news, women's poverty rates continued to be above the poverty rate for men in 2017. Nearly one in eight women – approximately 16 million – and more than one in six children – more than 12.8 million – lived in poverty in 2017. More than half (58 percent) of all poor children lived in families headed by unmarried mothers.¹

Women were 38 percent more likely to live in poverty than men.

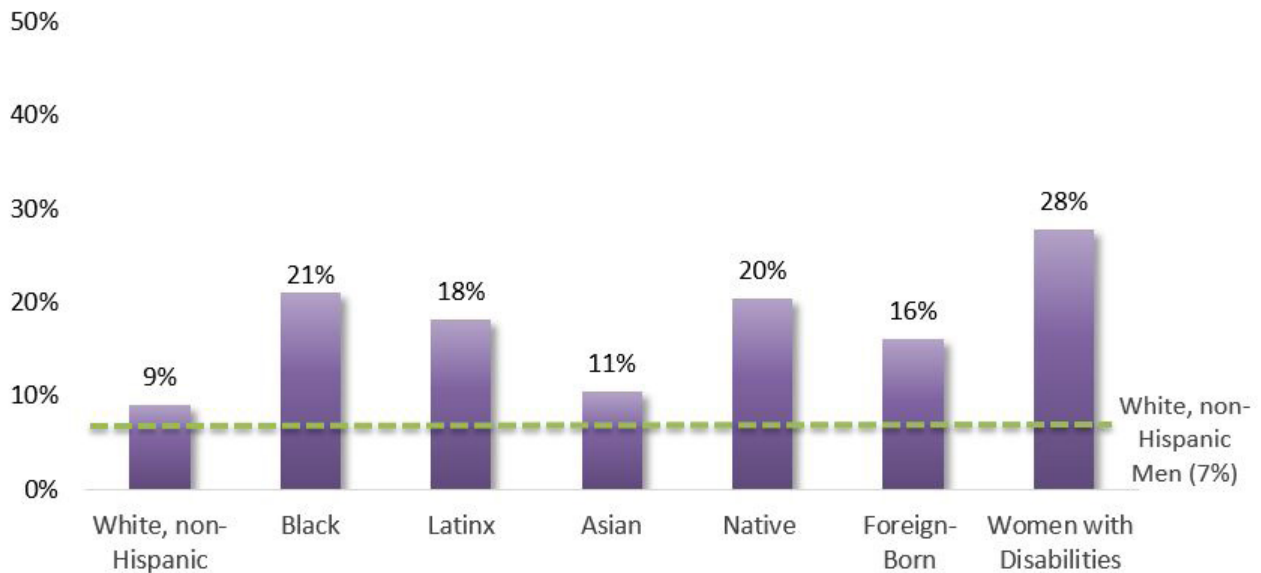
- Nearly one in eight women, which amounts to just under 16 million, lived in poverty in 2017.
- More than 2 in 5 (47 percent) of these women lived in extreme poverty, defined as income at or below 50 percent of the federal poverty level. This means 1 in 17 women lived in extreme poverty last year.
- Women were more likely than men to live in poverty in 2017, 12 percent and 9 percent, respectively. Women were also more likely than men to be in extreme poverty: 6 percent of women versus 4 percent of men lived in extreme poverty in 2017.

Poverty was even higher for certain groups of women

- Women in all racial and ethnic groups were more likely than white, non-Hispanic men to be in poverty. Nearly 1 in 10 (9 percent) of white, non-Hispanic women lived in poverty in 2017, compared to 7 percent of white, non-Hispanic men. However, poverty rates were particularly high for women of color:²
 - **Black women:** 21 percent of Black women lived in poverty.
 - **Native women:** 20 percent of Native women lived in poverty.
 - **Latinx women:** 18 percent of Latinx women lived in poverty.
 - **Asian women:** 11 percent of Asian women lived in poverty.
- More than 1 in 6 (16 percent) foreign born women lived in poverty in 2017.
- The poverty rate for women age 18 to 64 was higher for women with disabilities than it was for women without disabilities, 28 percent and 12 percent, respectively. The poverty rate among their male counterparts was lower: 22 percent of men with disabilities lived in poverty and 8 percent of men without disabilities lived in poverty.



POVERTY RATES FOR ADULT WOMEN, 2017



Source: Census Bureau, Current Population Survey. Figures for women with disabilities are for women 18-64.

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What Does the Federal Poverty Rate Measure?

The official poverty rate reported by the Census Bureau measures the percentage of the U.S. population with total income below the federal poverty threshold for their family size (e.g., \$24,858 in 2017 for a family of four with two children).

“Income” is calculated before taxes and includes only cash income, such as:

- Earnings
- Pension and retirement income
- Investment income (i.e. interest, dividends, royalties, estates, and trusts)
- Social Security
- Public assistance (non-cash benefits are not included in the measure - see below)
- Unemployment benefits, workers’ compensation, veterans’ payments
- Alimony and child support payments

A number of other federal and state benefits that help support low-income families are not counted as income under the official poverty measure. These include:

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits (formerly known as Food Stamps)
- Tax benefits (e.g., Earned Income Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit)
- Housing subsidies



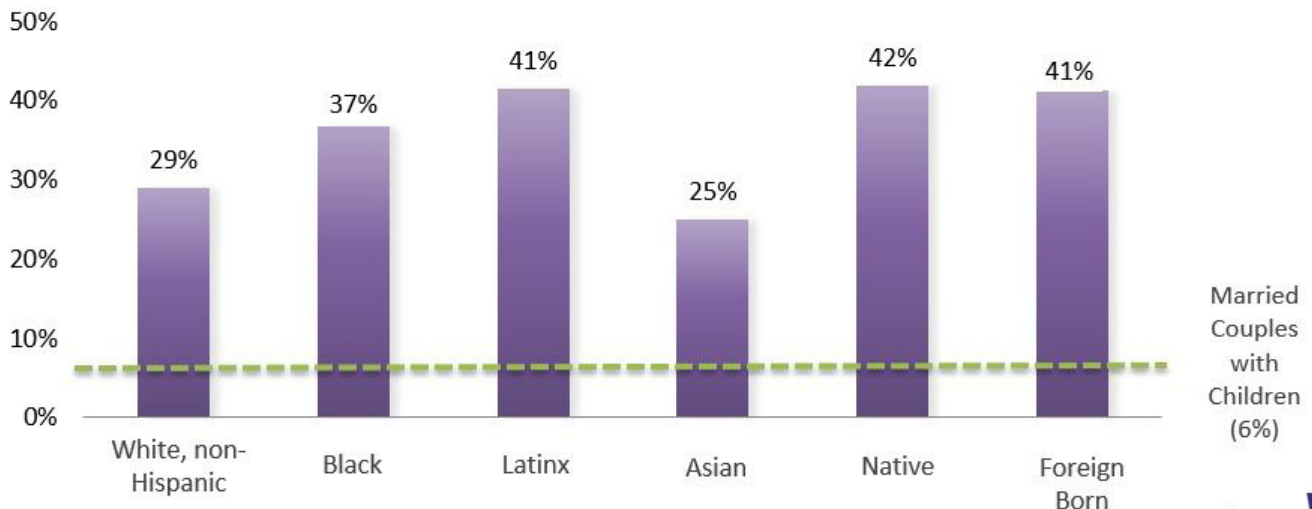
More than 1 in 6 children lived in poverty in 2017.

- More than 12.8 million kids lived in poverty in 2017, more than two out of five of whom (46 percent) lived in extreme poverty. This means that more than one in six (17 percent) children was poor last year.
- Poverty rates were even higher for certain groups of children:
 - **Black children:** Nearly 1 in 3 (29 percent) Black children lived in poverty.
 - **Latinx children:** 1 in 4 (25 percent) Latinx children lived in poverty.
 - **Native children:** More than 1 in 4 (27 percent) Native children lived in poverty.
 - **Asian children:** About 1 in 9 (11 percent) Asian children lived in poverty.
 - **White, non-Hispanic children:** Nearly 1 in 9 (11 percent) white, non-Hispanic children lived in poverty.
 - **Foreign-born children:** More than 1 in 4 (26 percent) foreign-born children lived in poverty.

More than 1 in 3 families headed by unmarried mothers lived in poverty in 2017

- Over half of all poor children (58 percent) lived in families headed by unmarried mothers.³
- 562,000 families headed by unmarried mothers (12 percent) were poor in 2017, even though the mother worked full time throughout the year.
- Families headed by unmarried mothers were much more likely to be in poverty than families headed by unmarried fathers or married couple families. The poverty rate for families headed by unmarried mothers was 34 percent, compared to 16 percent for families headed by unmarried fathers and 6 percent of families with children in married couple families.
- Families headed by women of color fared even worse:
 - **Black families headed by unmarried mothers:** Nearly 2 in 5 (37 percent) Black families headed by unmarried mothers lived in poverty.
 - **Latinx families headed by unmarried mothers:** More than 2 in 5 (41 percent) Latinx families headed by unmarried mothers lived in poverty.
 - **Native families headed by unmarried mothers:** More than 2 in 5 (42 percent) Native families headed by unmarried mothers lived in poverty.
 - **Asian families headed by unmarried mothers:** 1 in 4 (25 percent) Asian families headed by unmarried mothers lived in poverty.
 - **White, non-Hispanic families headed by unmarried mothers:** Nearly 1 in 3 (29 percent) white, non-Hispanic families headed by unmarried mothers lived in poverty.
- Among families headed by unmarried mothers who were foreign born, more than 2 in 5 (41 percent) lived in poverty in 2017.

POVERTY RATES FOR UNMARRIED MOTHER FAMILIES, 2017



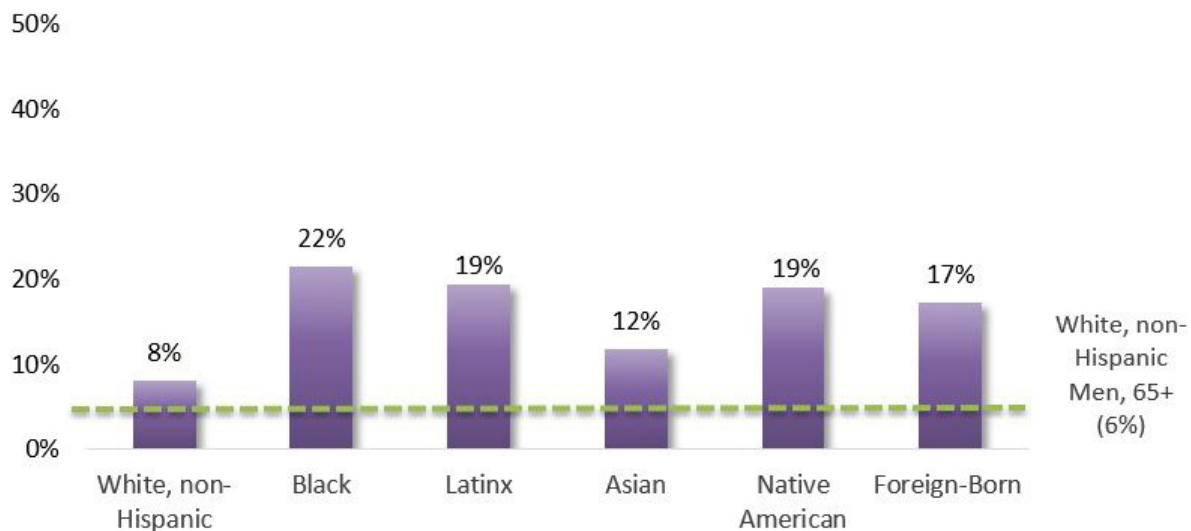
Source: Census Bureau, Current Population Survey

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Older women were more likely to be poor than older men

- Women made up nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of all poor people 65 and older in 2017.
- The poverty rate for women 65 and older was 11 percent, 3 percentage points higher than the poverty rate for older men (8 percent).
- Poverty rates were particularly high for certain groups of older women in 2017:
 - **Black women:** More than 1 in 5 (22 percent) Black women 65+ lived in poverty.
 - **Latinx women:** Nearly 1 in 5 (19 percent) Latinx women 65+ lived in poverty.
 - **Native women:** More than 1 in 5 (19 percent) Native women 65+ lived in poverty.
 - **Asian women:** More than 1 in 8 (12 percent) Asian women 65+ lived in poverty.
 - **White, non-Hispanic women:** Nearly 1 in 12 (8 percent) white, non-Hispanic women 65+ lived in poverty.
 - **Foreign-Born women:** More than 1 in 6 (17 percent) foreign-born women 65+ lived in poverty.
 - **Women living alone:** More than 1 in 6 (18 percent) women 65+ living alone lived in poverty, compared to 15 percent of men 65 and older living alone.

POVERTY RATES FOR WOMEN 65 AND OLDER, 2017



Source: Census Bureau, Current Population Survey

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- 1 All data are NWLC calculations of U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2017 Annual Social and Economic Supplement, available at <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps.html>.
- 2 The “Asian” race category includes those who identified themselves in the U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey as Asian. The “Black” race category includes those who identified themselves as Black or African American. The “Native” race category includes those who identified themselves as American Indian or Alaskan Native. The “white, non-Hispanic” race category includes those who identified themselves as white, but not of Hispanic origin. The “Latinx” category includes people of any race who identified themselves to be of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin.
- 3 More than 12.8 million children lived in poverty in 2017, which includes 332,000 not living in families.

