



INCOME SECURITY

NATIONAL SNAPSHOT: POVERTY AMONG WOMEN & FAMILIES, 2016

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The U.S. Census Bureau data released in September 2017 shows that many American families are experiencing some real economic gains. Despite this good news, women's poverty rates continued to be above the poverty rate for men in 2016. More than one in eight women – nearly 16.3 million – and more than one in six children – more than 13.2 million – lived in poverty in 2016. More than half of all children living in poverty lived in families headed by women.¹

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

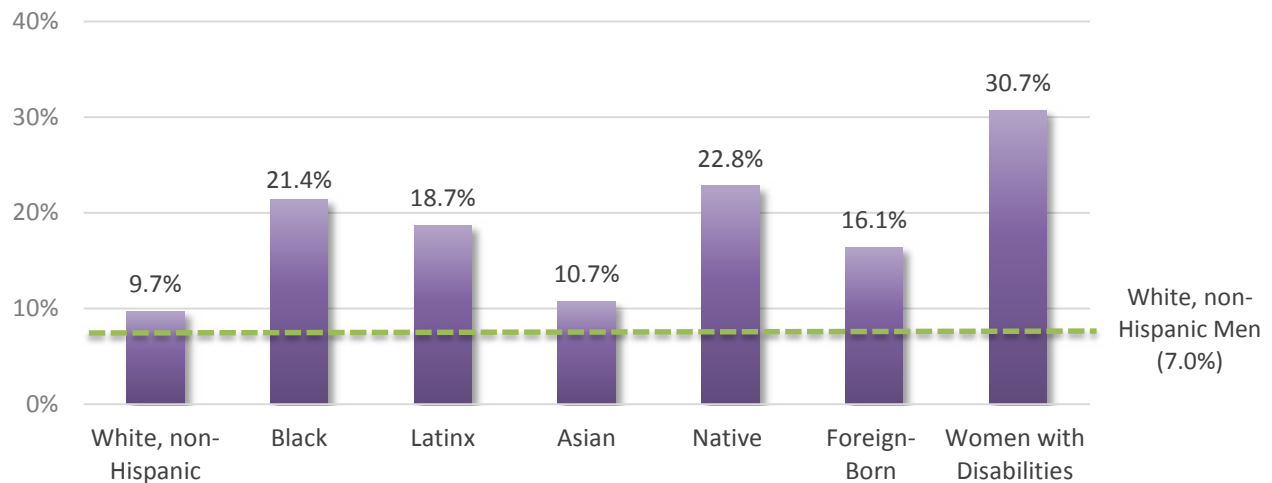
- More than one in eight women, nearly 16.3 million, lived in poverty in 2016. More than 2 in 5 (45.6 percent) of these women lived in extreme poverty, defined as income at or below 50 percent of the federal poverty level. This means nearly 1 in 17 women lived in extreme poverty last year.
- Women (12.8 percent) were 38 percent more likely than men (9.3 percent) to live in poverty in 2016. Women were also more likely than men to be in extreme poverty: 5.8 percent of women versus 4.2 percent of men lived in extreme poverty in 2016.

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 (9.7 percent) of white, non-Hispanic women lived in poverty in 2016, compared to 7.0 percent of white, non-Hispanic men. However, poverty rates were particularly high for women of color:²
 - **Black women:** 21.4 percent of Black women lived in poverty.
 - **Native women:** 22.8 percent of Native women lived in poverty.
 - **Latinx women:** 18.7 percent of Latinx women lived in poverty.
 - **Asian women:** 10.7 percent of Asian women lived in poverty.
- Nearly 1 in 6 (16.1 percent) women born abroad lived in poverty in 2016.
- The poverty rate for women with disabilities (ages 18-64) (30.7 percent) was higher than it was for women without disabilities (12.0 percent), men with disabilities (22.7 percent), and men without disabilities (8.6 percent).



Poverty Rates for Adult Women, 2016



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., \$25,160 in 2016 for a family of four with two children). “Income” is calculated before taxes and includes only cash income, such as:

- Earnings
- Pension income
- Investment income
- Social Security
- Unemployment benefits
- 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 2016

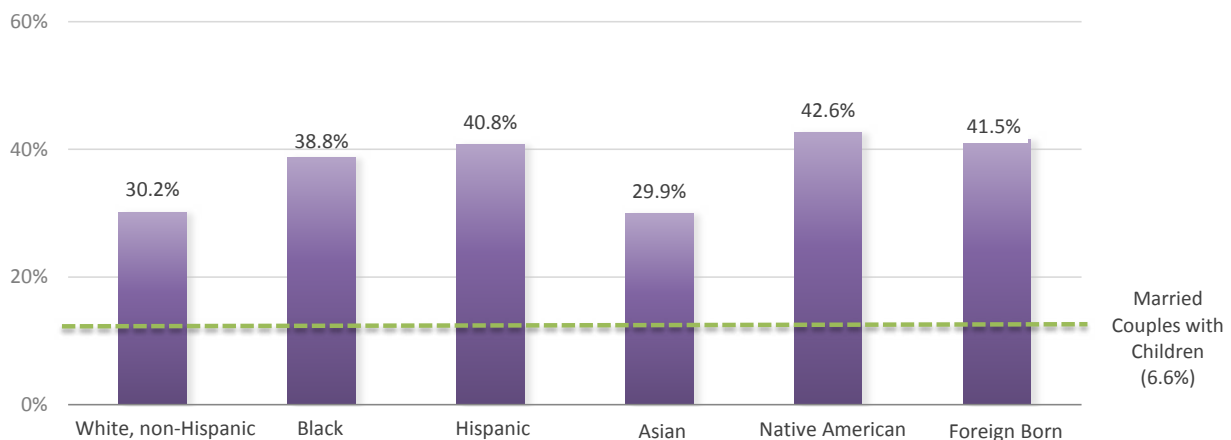
- More than 13.2 million kids lived in poverty in 2016, more than two out of five of whom (45.5 percent) lived in extreme poverty. This means that more than one in six (18.0 percent) children lived in poverty last year.
- Poverty rates were even higher for certain groups of children:
 - **Black children:** Nearly 1 in 3 (30.8 percent) Black children lived in poverty.
 - **Latinx children:** More than 1 in 4 (26.6 percent) of Latinx children lived in poverty.
 - **Native children:** More than 1 in 4 (25.4 percent) of Native children lived in poverty.
 - **Asian children:** About 1 in 9 (11.1 percent) of Asian children lived in poverty.
 - **White, non-Hispanic children:** Nearly 1 in 9 (10.8 percent) white, non-Hispanic children lived in poverty.
 - **Foreign-born children:** More than 1 in 4 (25.6 percent) of foreign-born children lived in poverty.



More than 1 in 3 single mother families lived in poverty in 2016

- Over half of all children in poverty (59.5 percent) lived in families headed by women.³
- Despite working full time throughout the year, 524,000 female-headed families (11.0 percent) lived in poverty in 2016.
- Female-headed families with children were much more likely to be in poverty than male-headed families or families headed by married couples. The poverty rate for female-headed families with children was 35.6 percent, compared to 17.3 percent for male-headed families with children and 6.6 percent of families with children headed by married couples.
- Families headed by women of color fared even worse:
 - **Black female-headed families:** Nearly 2 in 5 (38.8 percent) of Black female-headed families with children lived in poverty.
 - **Latinx female-headed families:** More than 2 in 5 (40.8 percent) of Latinx female-headed families with children lived in poverty.
 - **Native female-headed families:** More than 2 in 5 (42.6 percent) of Native female-headed families lived in poverty.
 - **Asian female-headed families:** Nearly 1 in 3 (29.9 percent) of Asian female-headed families lived in poverty.
 - **White, non-Hispanic female-headed families:** Nearly 1 in 3 (30.2 percent) white, non-Hispanic female-headed families lived in poverty.
- Families headed by women who were born abroad also experienced high rates of poverty: more than 2 in 5 (41.5 percent) of foreign-born female-headed families lived in poverty in 2016.

Poverty Rates for Single Mother Families With Children, 2016



Source: Census Bureau, Current Population Survey.

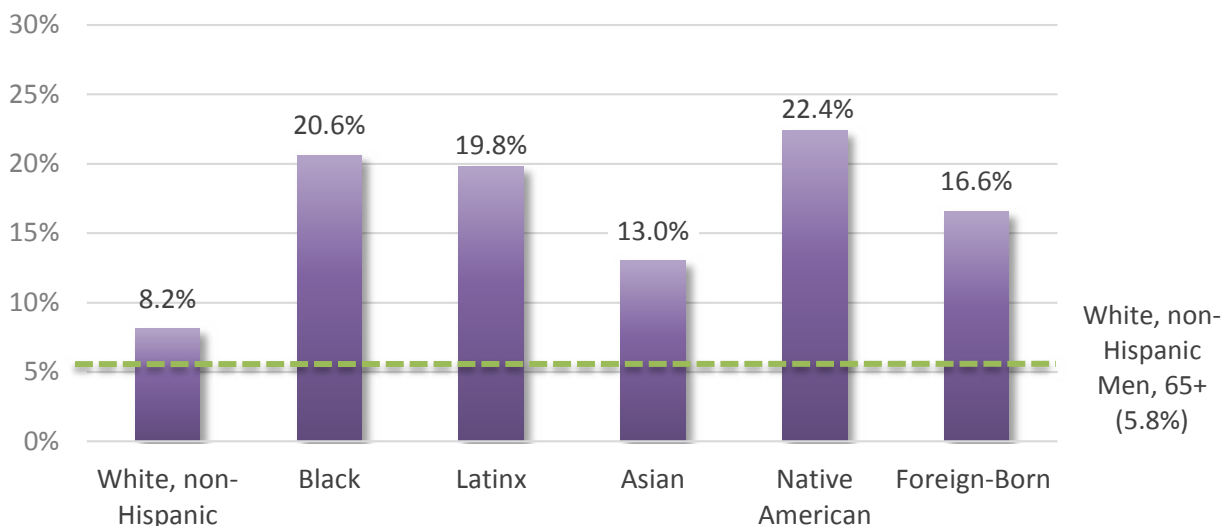
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Older women were more likely to live in poverty than older men

- Women made up nearly two-thirds (63.1 percent) of all people in poverty 65 and older in 2016.
- The poverty rate for women 65 and older was 10.6 percent, 3.0 percentage points higher than the poverty rate for older men (7.6 percent).
- Poverty rates were particularly high for certain groups of older women in 2016:
 - **Black women:** More than 1 in 5 (20.6 percent) Black women 65+ lived in poverty.
 - **Latinx women:** Nearly 1 in 5 (19.8 percent) Latinx women 65+ lived in poverty.
 - **Native women:** More than 1 in 5 (22.4) percent of Native women 65+ lived in poverty
 - **Asian women:** More than 1 in 8 (13.0 percent) of Asian women 65+ lived in poverty.
 - **White, non-Hispanic women:** Nearly 1 in 12 (8.2 percent) of white, non-Hispanic women 65+ lived in poverty.
 - **Foreign-Born women:** About 1 in 6 (16.6 percent) foreign-born women 65+ lived in poverty.
 - **Women living alone:** More than 1 in 6 (18.1 percent) women 65+ living alone lived in poverty, compared to 15.6 percent for men 65 and older living alone.

Poverty Rates for Women 65 and Older, 2016



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 13.2 million children lived in poverty in 2016. However, this statistic excludes the 403,000 children living in poverty who did not live in families.

