

Characteristics of Children's Families

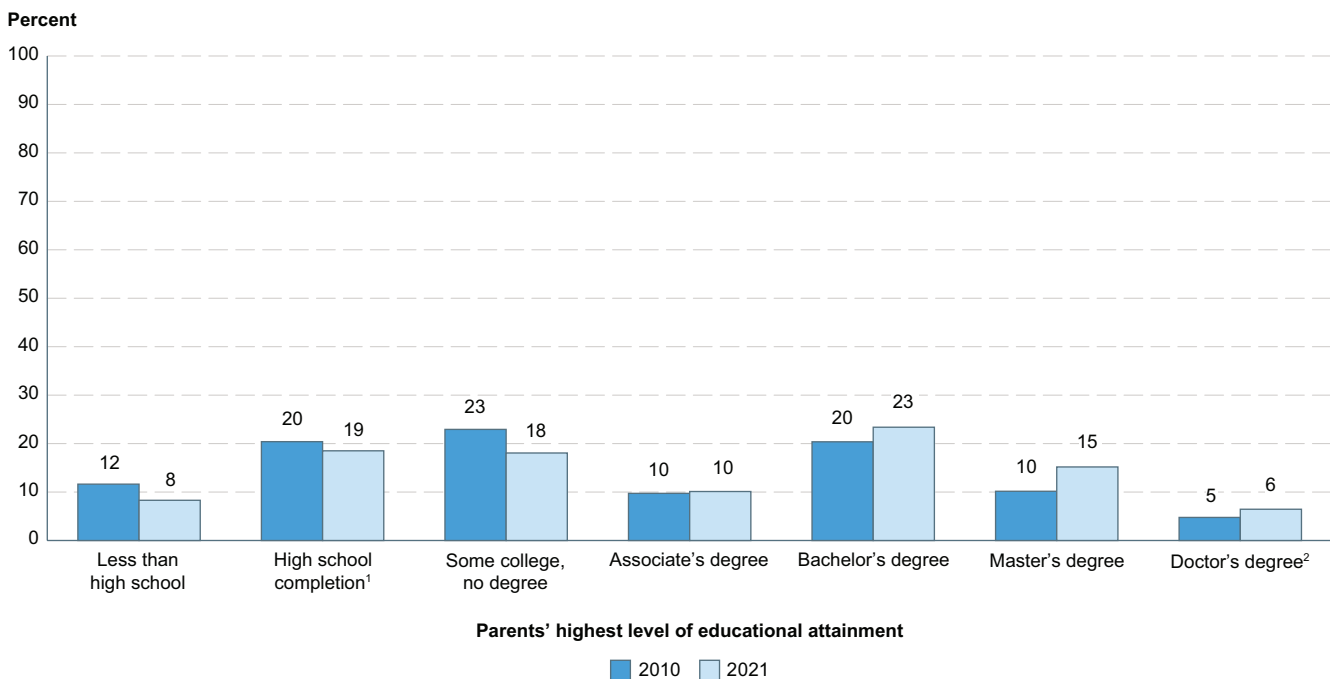
In 2021, some 45 percent of children lived in households in which no parent had attained a college degree, 26 percent lived with a related female householder (no spouse present), and 8 percent lived with a related male householder (no spouse present). In 2021, some 17 percent were in families living in poverty.

Characteristics of children's families are associated with children's educational experiences and their academic achievement.^{1, 2} Prior research has found that living in a household with lower parental educational attainment, living in a single-parent household, and living in poverty are associated with poor educational outcomes. For

more information on the relationship between family socioeconomic status and later postsecondary and employment outcomes, see the *Condition of Education 2019* Spotlight indicator [Young Adult Educational and Employment Outcomes by Family Socioeconomic Status](#).

Parental Educational Attainment

Figure 1. Percentage distribution of children under age 18, by parents' highest level of educational attainment: 2010 and 2021



¹ Includes parents who completed high school through equivalency programs, such as a GED program.

² Includes parents who attained professional degrees.

NOTE: Data are based on sample surveys of the entire population residing within the United States, including the 50 states and the District of Columbia, but this figure includes only children under age 18 who resided with at least one of their parents (including an adoptive or stepparent). Parents include adoptive and stepparents but exclude parents not residing in the same household as their children. Parents' highest level of educational attainment is the highest level of education attained by any parent residing in the same household as the child. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data. Some data have been revised from previously published figures.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2010 and 2021. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2022*, table 104.70.

Educational attainment refers to the highest level of education an individual has completed. In this indicator, parents' highest level of educational attainment is determined by the highest level of attainment of any parent³ residing in the household with the child. In 2021, some 55 percent⁴ of children under age 18 lived in households in which at least one parent had attained a college degree (an associate's degree or higher), including

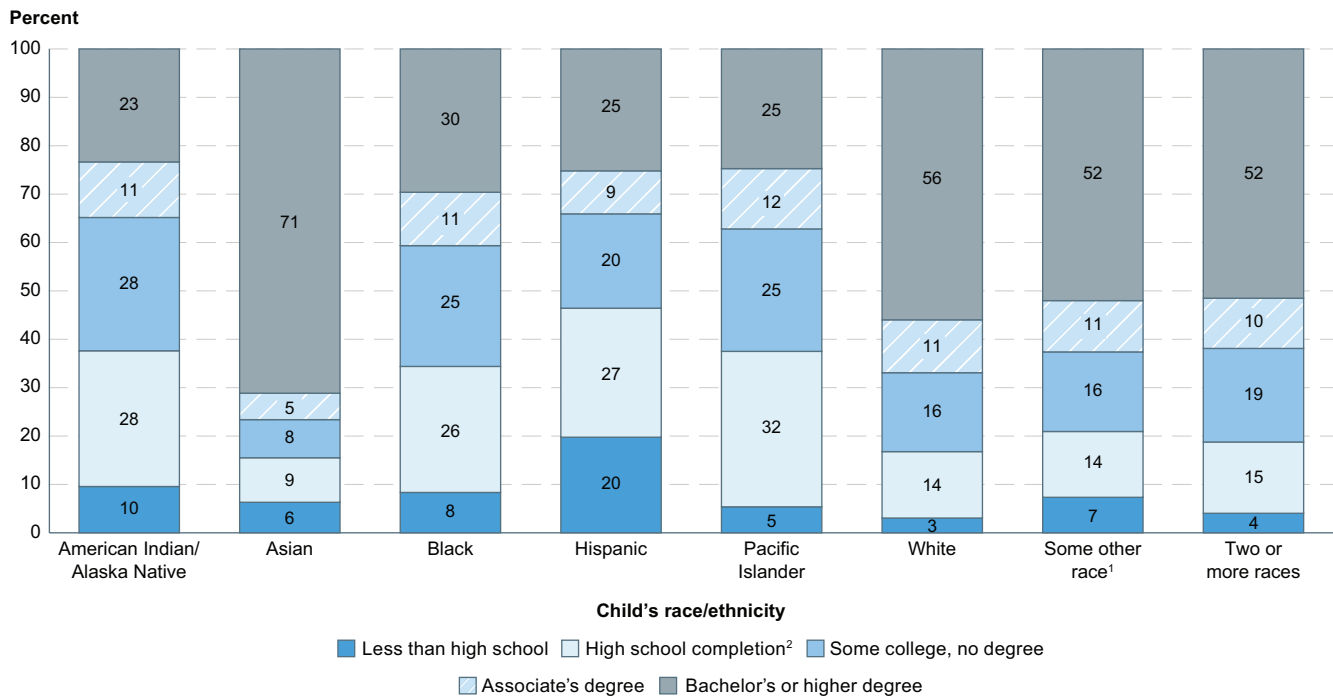
- 10 percent living in households in which at least one parent had completed an associate's degree;
- 23 percent living in households in which at least one parent had completed a bachelor's degree;
- 15 percent living in households in which at least one parent had completed a master's degree; and
- 6 percent living in households in which at least one parent had completed a doctor's degree).⁵

Conversely, 45 percent of children lived in households in which no parent had attained a college degree, including

- 8 percent living in households in which no parent had completed high school;
- 19 percent living in households in which at least one parent had completed high school;⁶ and
- 18 percent living in households in which at least one parent had attended some college but did not receive a degree.

Compared with 2010, higher percentages of children in 2021 lived in households in which at least one parent had completed a college degree. This was true at all degree levels from associate's through doctor's degrees. For example, 23 percent of children in 2021 lived in households in which the highest level of education attained by either parent was a bachelor's degree, compared with 20 percent in 2010.

Figure 2. Percentage distribution of children under age 18, by child's race/ethnicity and parents' highest level of educational attainment: 2021



¹ Consists of respondents who wrote in some other race that was not included as an option on the questionnaire.

² Includes parents who completed high school through equivalency programs, such as a GED program.

NOTE: Data are based on sample surveys of the entire population residing within the United States, including the 50 states and the District of Columbia, but this figure includes only children under age 18 who resided with at least one of their parents (including an adoptive or stepparent). Parents include adoptive and stepparents but exclude parents not residing in the same household as their children. Parents' highest level of educational attainment is the highest level of education attained by any parent residing in the same household as the child. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data. Detail may not sum to totals due to rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2021. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2022*, table 104.70.

The highest level of education attained by either parent in the household of children under age 18 varied across racial/ethnic groups in 2021. The percentage of children under age 18 who lived in households in which no parent had completed high school was

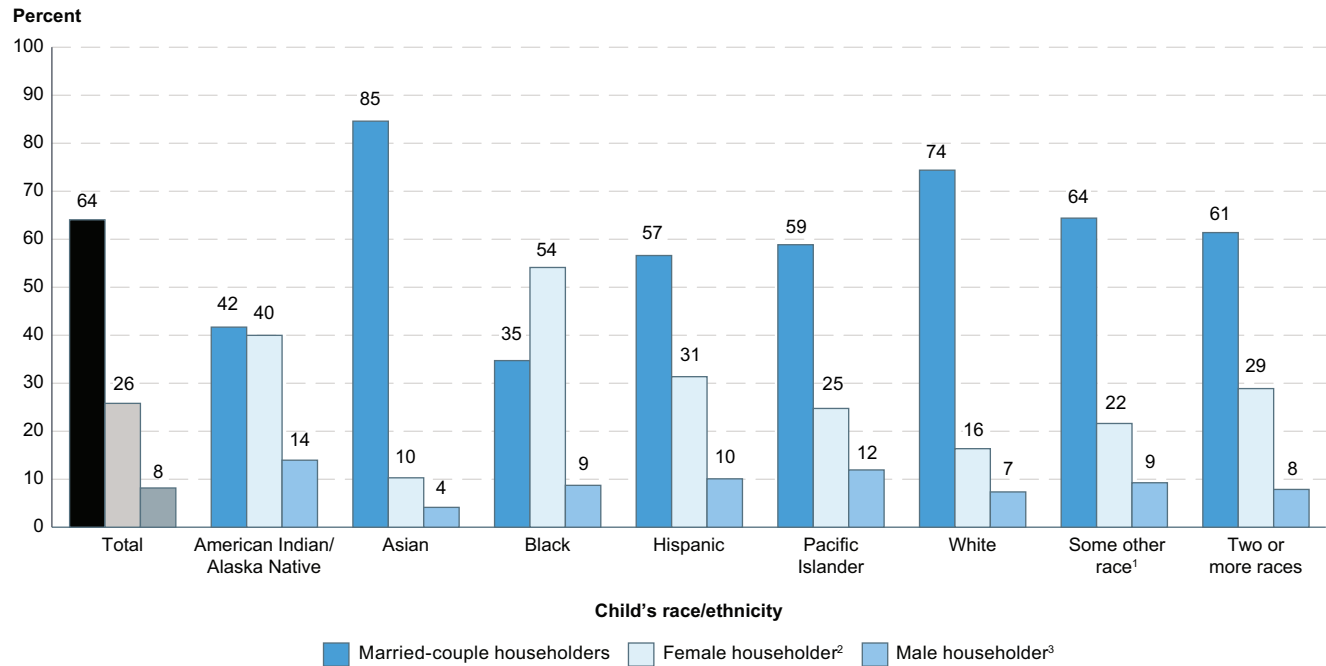
- highest for Hispanic children (20 percent); and
- lowest for White children (3 percent).

In 2021, the percentage of children who lived in households in which the highest level of education attained by either parent was at least a bachelor's degree was

- highest for Asian children (71 percent); and
- lowest for Hispanic (25 percent), Pacific Islander⁷ (25 percent), and American Indian/Alaska Native (23 percent) children.

Children's Living Arrangements

Figure 3. Percentage distribution of children under age 18, by child's race/ethnicity and living arrangement: 2021



¹ Consists of respondents who wrote in some other race that was not included as an option on the questionnaire.
² Children living with a "female" householder live with a female parent or a related female householder with no spouse present (i.e., the householder(s) or parent(s) are unmarried, or there is no spouse in the household).
³ Children living with a "male" householder live with a male parent or a related male householder with no spouse present (i.e., the householder(s) or parent(s) are unmarried, or there is no spouse in the household).
 NOTE: Data are based on sample surveys of the noninstitutionalized population in the United States, including the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Includes all children who live either with their parent(s) or with a householder to whom they are related by birth, marriage, or adoption (except a child who is the spouse of the householder). Children are classified by the marital status of the householder who is related to the children. The householder is the person (or one of the people) who owns or rents (maintains) the housing unit. Foster children, children in unrelated subfamilies, children living in group quarters, and children who were reported as the householder or spouse of the householder are not included in this analysis. Some 2 percent of children under 18 live in these households. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data. Data do not sum to 100 percent because the "All other children" category is not reported.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2021. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2022*, table 102.20.

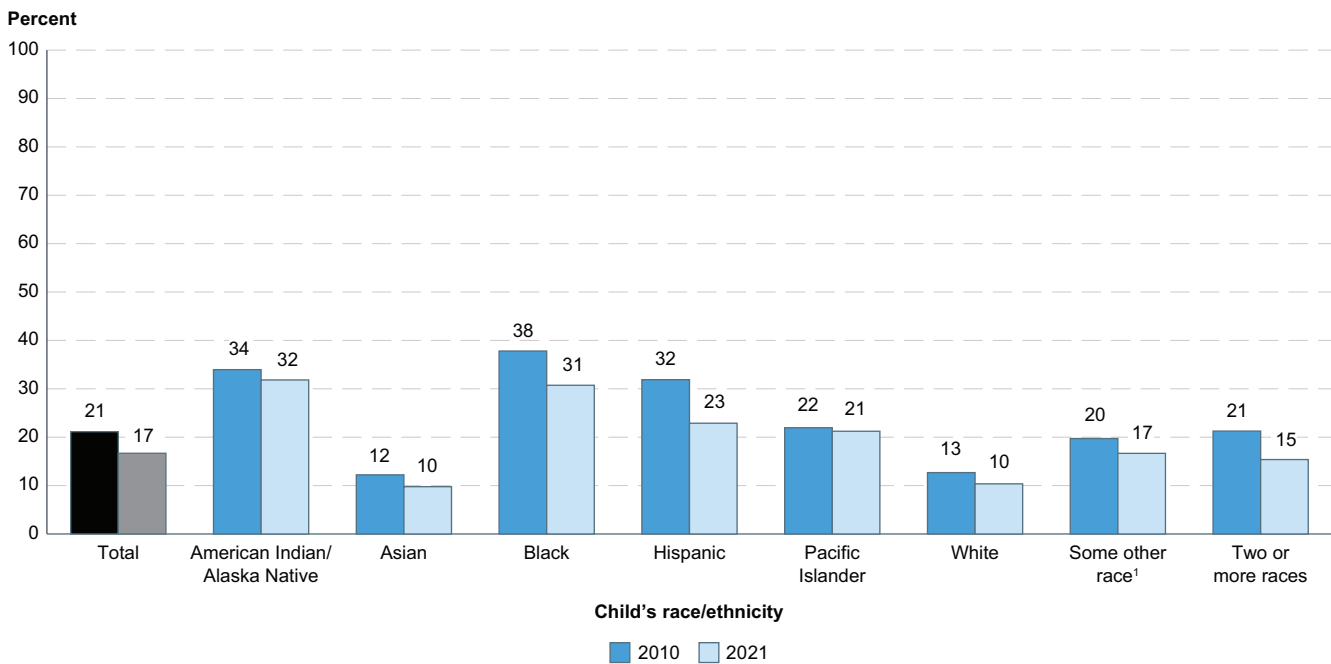
In 2021, the living arrangements⁸ of children under age 18 varied by race/ethnicity. Overall,

- 64 percent of children lived with related married-couple householders;
- 26 percent of children lived with a related female householder;⁹ and
- 8 percent of children lived with a related male householder.¹⁰

Across racial/ethnic groups, a majority of children lived in married-couple households, except for those who were American Indian/Alaska Native (42 percent) and Black (35 percent). Among Black children, a larger percentage of children lived with a female householder (54 percent) than with married-couple householders (35 percent).

Children Living in Poverty

Figure 4. Percentage of children under age 18 in families living in poverty, by child's race/ethnicity: 2010 and 2021



¹ Consists of respondents who wrote in some other race that was not included as an option on the questionnaire.
 NOTE: Respondents were interviewed throughout the given year and reported the income they received during the previous 12 months. Data are based on sample surveys of the entire population residing within United States, including the 50 states and the District of Columbia, but this figure includes only related children under age 18. Poverty status is determined by the Census Bureau using a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition. For additional information about poverty status, see <https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/poverty/guidance/poverty-measures.html>. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data. Some data have been revised from previously published figures.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2010 and 2021. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2022*, table 102.60.

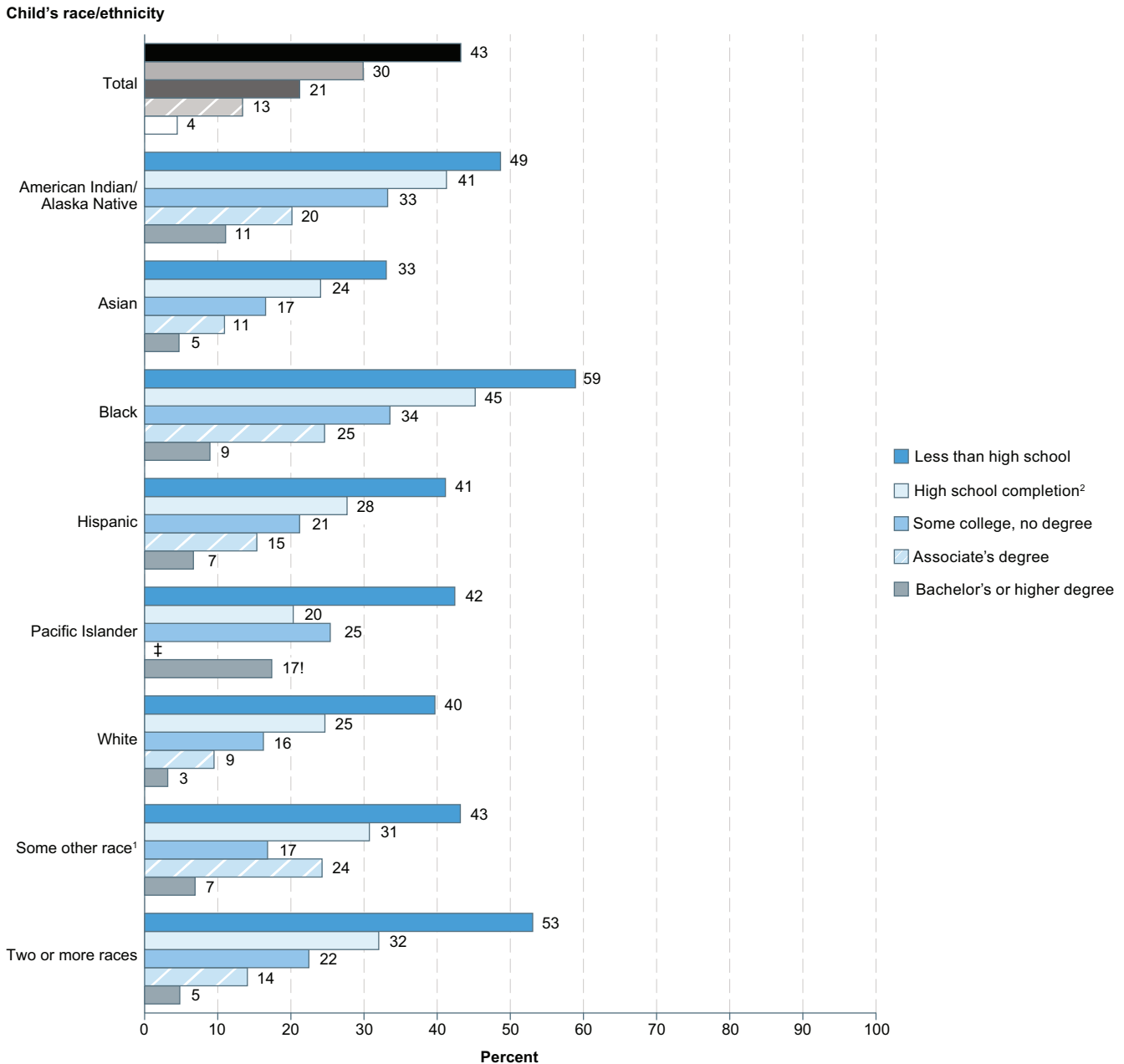
Approximately 12 million children under age 18 were in families living in poverty in 2021.¹¹ The poverty rate for children in 2021 (17 percent) was lower than in 2010 (21 percent). A decline in the poverty rate was observed for children across several racial/ethnic groups, the exceptions being American Indian/Alaska Native children, Pacific Islander children, and children of Some other race.¹² For example, 23 percent of Hispanic children lived in poverty in 2021, compared with 32 percent in 2010. Similarly, 31 percent of Black children lived in poverty in 2021, compared with 38 percent in 2010.

The poverty rate for children under age 18 varied across racial/ethnic groups in 2021. Poverty rates were higher than the national average (17 percent) for children who were

- American Indian/Alaska Native (32 percent);
- Black (31 percent); and
- Hispanic (23 percent).

Meanwhile, the poverty rates of children who were of Two or more races (15 percent), White (10 percent), and Asian (10 percent) were lower than the national average. The poverty rate for Pacific Islander children and children of Some other race was not measurably different from the national average.

Figure 5. Percentage of children under age 18 in families living in poverty, by child's race/ethnicity and parents' highest level of educational attainment: 2021

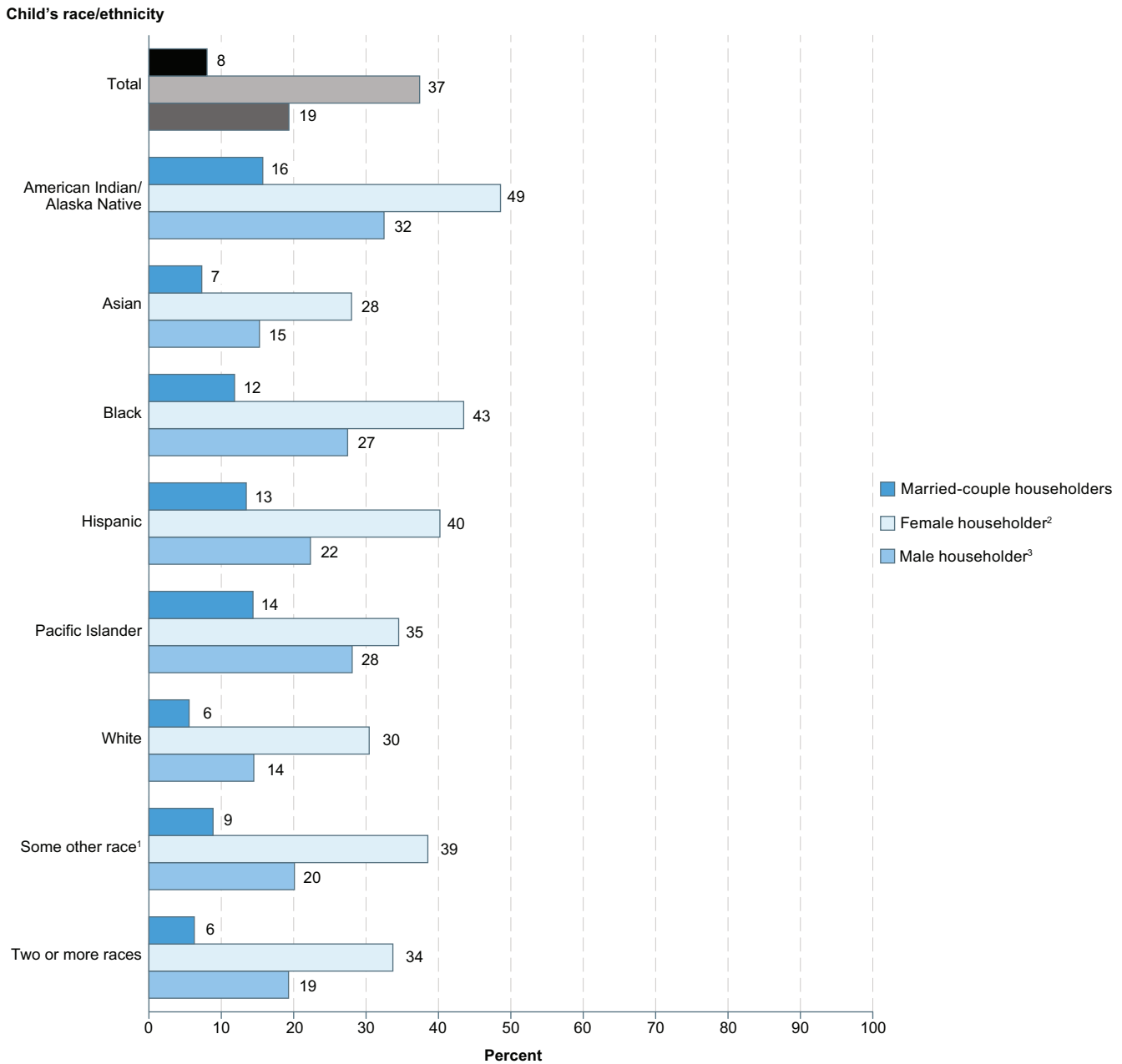


! Interpret data with caution. The coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent.
 ‡ Reporting standards not met. Either there are too few cases for a reliable estimate or the coefficient of variation (CV) is 50 percent or greater.
¹ Consists of respondents who wrote in some other race that was not included as an option on the questionnaire.
² Includes parents who completed high school through equivalency programs, such as a GED program.
 NOTE: Respondents were interviewed throughout the given year and reported the income they received during the previous 12 months. Data are based on sample surveys of the entire population residing within the United States, including the 50 states and the District of Columbia, but this figure includes only children under the age of 18 who resided with at least one of their parents (including an adoptive or stepparent). Poverty status is determined by the Census Bureau using a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition. For additional information about poverty status, see <https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/poverty/guidance/poverty-measures.html>. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2021. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2022*, table 102.62.

In 2021, among those who lived with at least one parent, the poverty rate for children under age 18 was highest for those in households in which no parent had completed high school (43 percent) and lowest for those in households in which the highest level of education attained by either parent was a bachelor's or higher

degree (4 percent). This pattern generally held for all racial/ethnic groups except for Pacific Islander.¹³ There were no measurable differences in poverty rates of Pacific Islander children by parents' highest level of educational attainment.¹⁴

Figure 6. Percentage of children under age 18 in families living in poverty, by child's race/ethnicity and living arrangement: 2021



¹ Consists of respondents who wrote in some other race that was not included as an option on the questionnaire.

² Children living with a "female" householder live with a female parent or a related female householder with no spouse present (i.e., the householder(s) or parent(s) are unmarried, or there is no spouse in the household).

³ Children living with a "male" householder live with a male parent or a related male householder with no spouse present (i.e., the householder(s) or parent(s) are unmarried, or there is no spouse in the household).

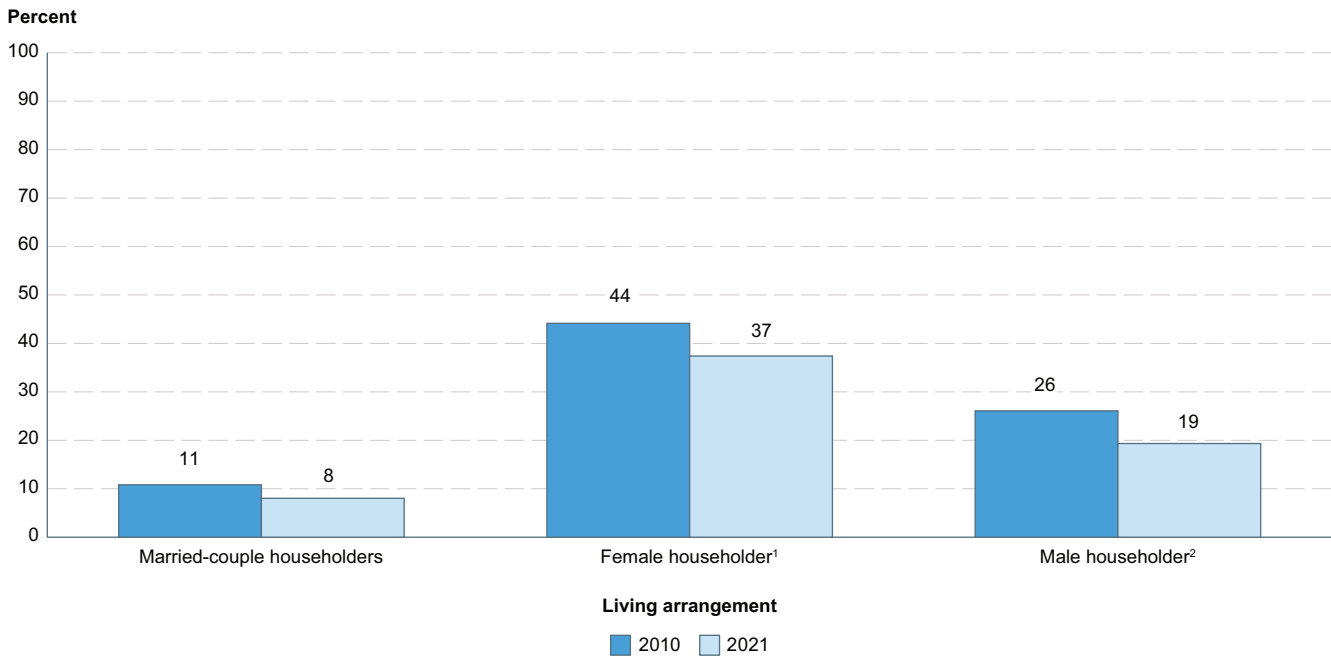
NOTE: Data are based on sample surveys of the noninstitutionalized population in the United States, including the 50 states and the District of Columbia, but this figure includes only related children under age 18. Includes all children who live either with their parent(s) or with a householder to whom they are related by birth, marriage, or adoption (except a child who is the spouse of the householder). Children are classified by the marital status of the householder who is related to the children. The householder is the person (or one of the people) who owns or rents (maintains) the housing unit. Foster children, children in unrelated subfamilies, children living in group quarters, and children who were reported as the householder or spouse of the householder are not included in this analysis. Poverty status is determined by the Census Bureau using a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition. For additional information about poverty status, see <https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/poverty/guidance/poverty-measures.html>. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data. Data do not sum to 100 percent because the "All other children" category is not reported.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2021. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2022*, table 102.60.

In 2021, the poverty rate for children under age 18 was highest for those living with a female householder (37 percent), followed by those living with a male householder (19 percent) and those living in married-couple households (8 percent). This pattern—of children living in married-couple households having the lowest poverty

rate and those living with a female householder having the highest poverty rate—was observed across nearly all racial/ethnic groups. The exception was Pacific Islander children, for whom there was no measurable difference between poverty rates for children living with a female householder and those living with a male householder.

Figure 7. Percentage of children under age 18 in families living in poverty, by living arrangement: 2010 and 2021



¹ Children living with a “female” householder live with a female parent or a related female householder with no spouse present (i.e., the householder(s) or parent(s) are unmarried, or there is no spouse in the household).

² Children living with a “male” householder live with a male parent or a related male householder with no spouse present (i.e., the householder(s) or parent(s) are unmarried, or there is no spouse in the household).

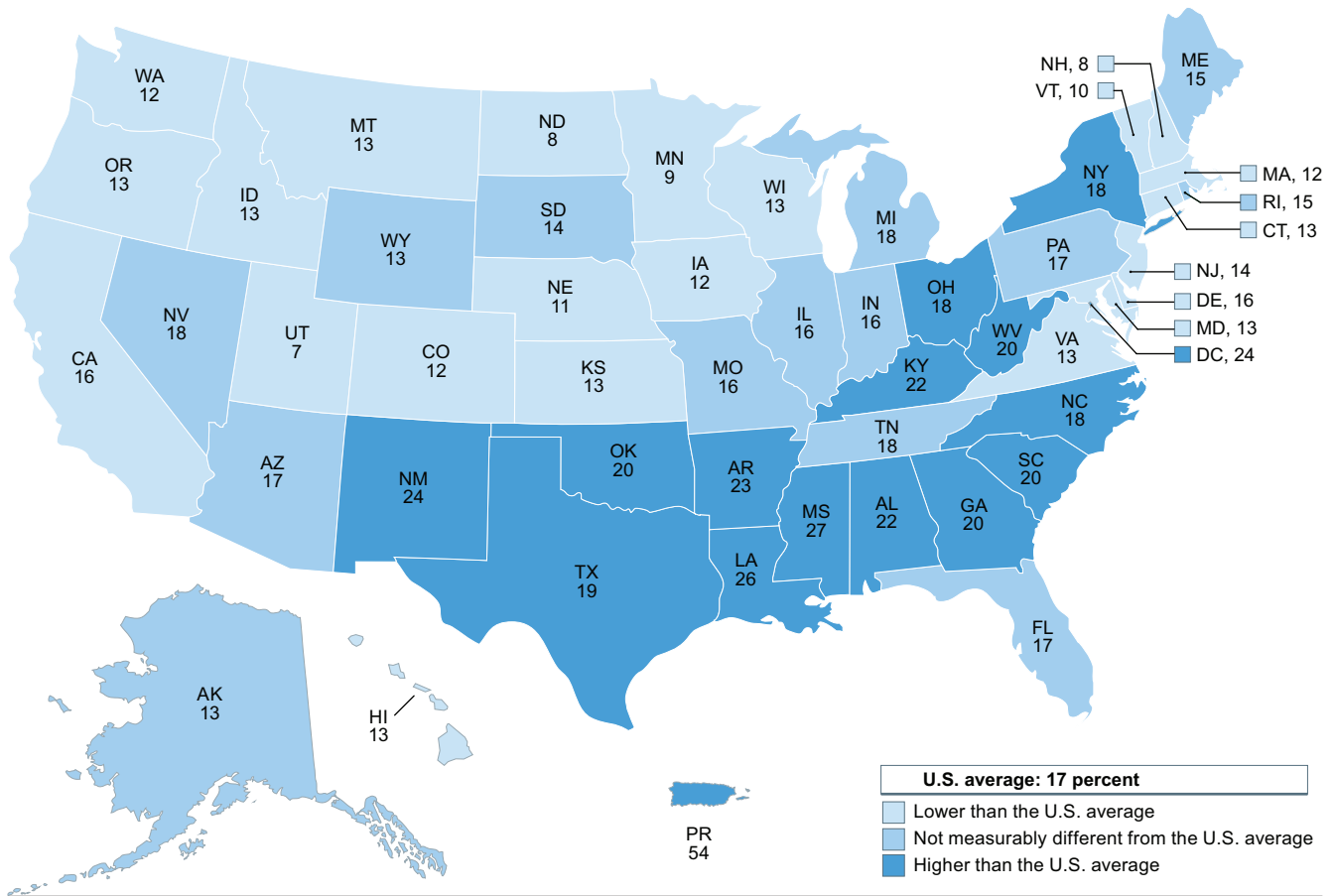
NOTE: Data are based on sample surveys of the noninstitutionalized population in the United States, including the 50 states and the District of Columbia, but this figure includes only related children under age 18. Includes all children who live either with their parent(s) or with a householder to whom they are related by birth, marriage, or adoption (except a child who is the spouse of the householder). Children are classified by the marital status of the householder who is related to the children. The householder is the person (or one of the people) who owns or rents (maintains) the housing unit. Foster children, children in unrelated subfamilies, children living in group quarters, and children who were reported as the householder or spouse of the householder are not included in this analysis. Some 2 percent of children under 18 live in these households. Poverty status is determined by the Census Bureau using a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition. For additional information about poverty status, see <https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/poverty/guidance/poverty-measures.html>. Data do not sum to 100 percent because the “All other children” category is not reported. Some data have been revised from previously published figures.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2010 and 2021. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2022*, table 102.60.

The poverty rate in 2021 was lower than in 2010 for children under age 18 living with a female householder (37 vs. 44 percent), a male householder (19 vs. 26 percent), and married-couple householders (8 vs. 11 percent). This pattern of lower child poverty rates in 2021 than in 2010

for all living arrangements was observed for children who were Black, Hispanic, White, and of Two or more races. For Asian children, the poverty rate was lower in 2021 than in 2010 for those living with married-couple householders and those living with male householders.

Figure 8. Percentage of children under age 18 in families living in poverty, by state: 2021



NOTE: Respondents were interviewed throughout the given year and reported the income they received during the previous 12 months. Data are based on sample surveys of the entire population residing within United States, including the 50 states, District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, but this figure includes only noninstitutionalized persons living in households. Data are available for persons living in group quarters—both noninstitutionalized (e.g., college housing or military barracks) and institutionalized (e.g., prisons or nursing facilities); however, group quarters data are excluded from this figure. The U.S. average represents the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Poverty status is determined by the Census Bureau using a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition. For additional information about poverty status, see <https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/poverty/guidance/poverty-measures.html>. Based on income and family size data from the American Community Survey (ACS).
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2021. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2022*, table 102.40.

While the national average poverty rate for children under age 18 was 17 percent in 2021, the rates among states and the District of Columbia ranged from 7 percent in Utah to 27 percent in Mississippi. Twenty-one states had child poverty rates that were lower than the national average, 14 states and the District of Columbia had rates that were higher than the national average, and 15 states had rates that were not measurably different from the national average. Of the 14 states and the District of

Columbia that had poverty rates that were higher than the national average, the majority (12) were located in the South. Additionally, Puerto Rico (54 percent) had a higher poverty rate than the national average. In 37 states and the District of Columbia, the poverty rates were lower in 2021 than in 2010. In the remaining 13 states and Puerto Rico, there was no measurable difference between the poverty rates in 2021 and 2010.

Endnotes:

¹ Pungello, E.P., Kainz, K., Burchinal, M., Wasik, B.H., Sparling, J.J., Ramey, C.T., and Campbell, F.A. (2010, February). Early Educational Intervention, Early Cumulative Risk, and the Early Home Environment as Predictors of Young Adult Outcomes Within a High-Risk Sample. *Child Development*, 81(1): 410-426. Retrieved December 30, 2022, from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2009.01403.x/full>.

² Ross, T., Kena, G., Rathbun, A., KewalRamani, A., Zhang, J., Kristapovich, P., and Manning, E. (2012). *Higher Education: Gaps in Access and Persistence Study* (NCES 2012-046). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved December 30, 2022, from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2012046>.

³ Parents include adoptive and stepparents but exclude parents not residing in the same household as their children.

⁴ Percentages listed below do not sum to the total here due to rounding.

⁵ Includes parents who attained professional degrees.

⁶ Includes parents who completed high school through equivalency programs, such as a GED program.

⁷ The percentage of Pacific Islander children living in households with at least one parent who had a bachelor's or higher degree was not measurably different from the corresponding percentage of Black children.

⁸ Children are classified by the marital status of the householder who is related to the children. The householder is the person (or one of the people) who owns or rents (maintains) the housing unit. Foster children, children in unrelated subfamilies, children living in group quarters, and children who were reported as the householder or spouse of the householder are not included in this analysis. Some 2 percent of children under 18 live in these households.

⁹ Children living with a "female" householder live with a female parent or a related female householder with no spouse present (i.e., the householder(s) or parent(s) are unmarried, or there is no spouse in the household).

¹⁰ Children living with a "male" householder live with a male parent or a related male householder with no spouse present (i.e., the householder(s) or parent(s) are unmarried, or there is no spouse in the household).

¹¹ In this indicator, data on household income and the number of people living in the household are combined with the poverty threshold, published by the Census Bureau, to determine the poverty status of children. A household includes all families in which children are related to the householder by birth or adoption, or through marriage. The householder is the person (or one of the people) who owns or rents (maintains) the housing unit. In 2021, the poverty threshold for a family of four with two related children under 18 years old was \$27,479. For a more detailed breakdown of the 2021 poverty rate, refer to [Table 1. Weighted Average Poverty Thresholds for Families of Specified Size: 1959 to 2021](#) on the Census Bureau website.

¹² Consists of respondents who wrote in some other race that was not included as an option on the questionnaire.

¹³ For American Indian/Alaska Native children, the poverty rate for children living in households in which at least one parent had completed high school (41 percent) was not measurably different from the rate for those living in households in which no parent completed high school (49 percent).

¹⁴ In 2021, reporting standards were not met for Pacific Islander children living in households where at least one parent had attained an associate's degree.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2022*, tables 102.20, 102.40, 102.60, 102.62, and 104.70

Related indicators and resources: [Children Living in Poverty \[Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups\]](#); [Children's Living Arrangements \[Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups\]](#); [Concentration of Public School Students Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch; Disparities in Educational Outcomes Among Male Youth \[The Condition of Education 2015 Spotlight\]](#); [Education Demographic and Geographic Estimates \(EDGE\)](#); [Risk Factors and Academic Outcomes in Kindergarten Through Third Grade \[The Condition of Education 2017 Spotlight\]](#); [Snapshot: Children Living in Poverty for Racial/Ethnic Subgroups \[Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups\]](#); [Young Adult Educational and Employment Outcomes by Family Socioeconomic Status \[The Condition of Education 2019 Spotlight\]](#)

Glossary: Associate's degree; Bachelor's degree; College; Doctor's degree; Educational attainment; Geographic region; High school completer; Household; Master's degree; Poverty (official measure); Racial/ethnic group