

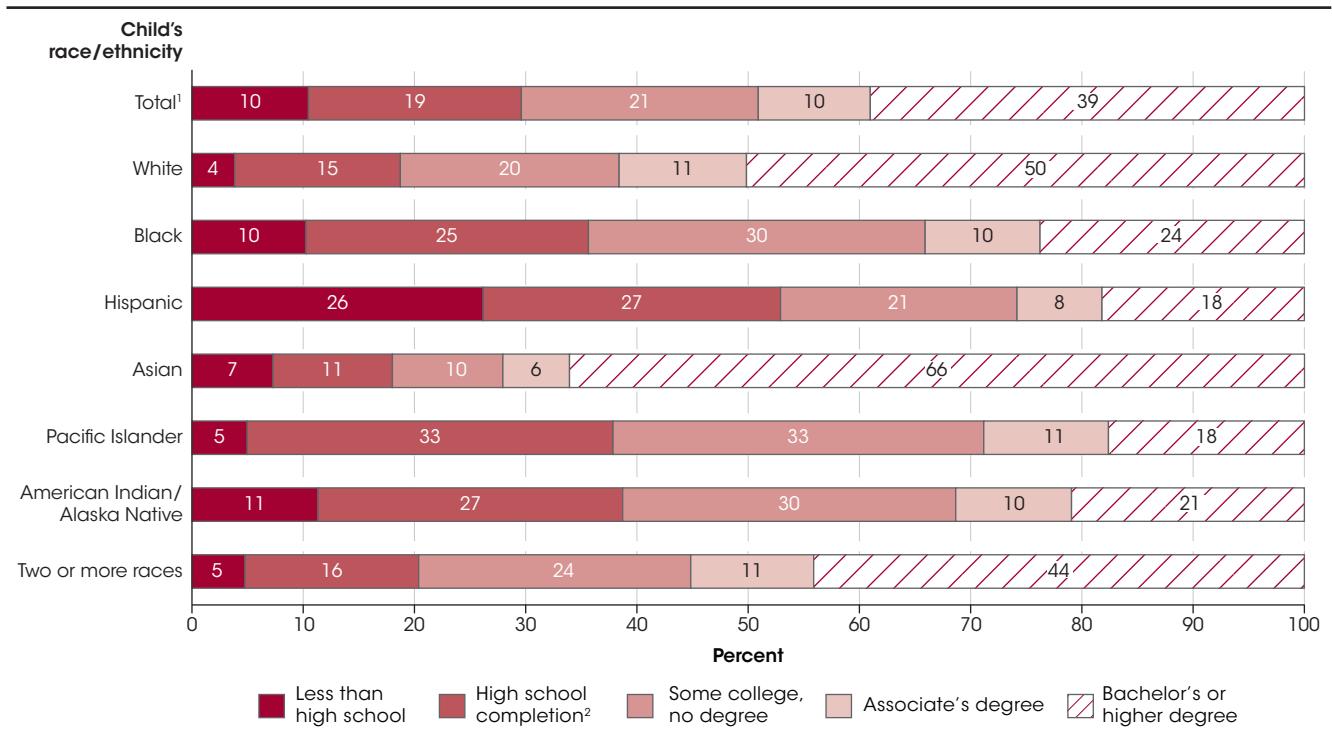
# Characteristics of Children's Families

*In 2015, some 10 percent of children under the age of 18 had parents who had not completed high school, 27 percent lived in mother-only households, 8 percent lived in father-only households, and 20 percent were living in poverty.*

Characteristics of children's families are associated with children's educational experiences and their academic achievement. Prior research finds that risk factors, such as having a parent who did not complete high school, living in a single-parent household, and living in poverty, are associated with poor educational outcomes, including low achievement scores, having to repeat a grade, and dropping out of high school.<sup>1,2</sup> In 2015, some 10 percent of children under the age of 18 had parents who had not

completed high school,<sup>3</sup> 27 percent lived in mother-only households, 8 percent lived in father-only households, and 20 percent were in families living in poverty. This indicator examines the prevalence of these risk factors among racial/ethnic groups and, for poverty status, among states. For more information on associations of risk factors with early learning, please see the Spotlight indicator [Risk Factors and Academic Outcomes in Kindergarten Through Third Grade](#).

**Figure 1. Percentage distribution of children under age 18, by child's race/ethnicity and parents' highest level of educational attainment: 2015**



<sup>1</sup> Total includes races/ethnicities not reported separately.

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

NOTE: Includes only children under age 18 who resided with at least one of their parents (including an adoptive or stepparent). Parents' highest level of educational attainment is the highest level of education attained by any parent residing in the same household as the child. Parents include adoptive and stepparents but exclude parents not residing in the same household as their child. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2015. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 104.70.

In 2015, some 39 percent of children under age 18 had parents whose highest level of educational attainment was a bachelor's or higher degree: 21 percent had parents who had completed a bachelor's degree, 12 percent had parents who had completed a master's degree, and 5 percent had parents who had completed a doctor's degree.<sup>4</sup> In addition, 10 percent of children had parents who had not

completed high school, 19 percent had parents who had only completed high school,<sup>5</sup> 21 percent had parents who attended some college but did not receive a degree, and 10 percent had parents who had completed an associate's degree. The percentages of children whose parents had completed an associate's degree or a bachelor's or higher degree were greater in 2015 than in 2010. In contrast, the

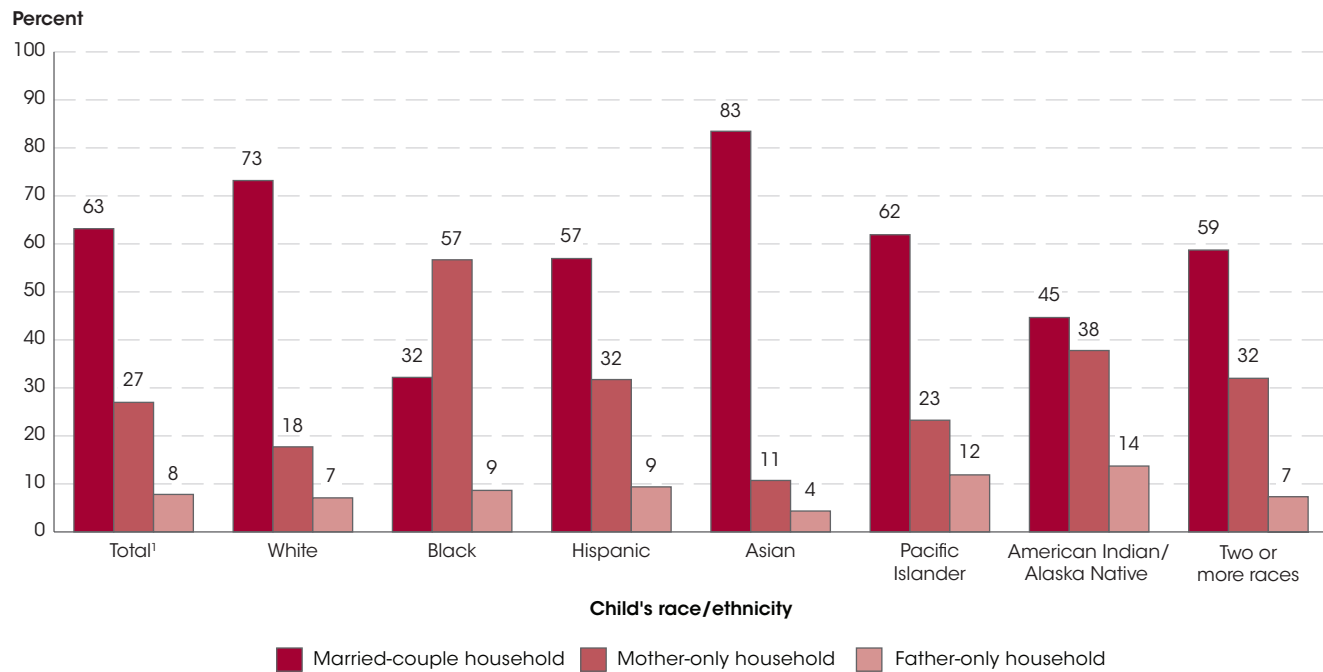
percentages of children whose parents had not completed high school, had only completed high school, and who attended some college but did not receive a degree were lower in 2015 than in 2010.

The percentage of children under age 18 whose parents had attained different levels of education varied across racial/ethnic groups in 2015. For example, the percentage of children whose parents had completed a bachelor’s or higher degree was highest for Asian children (66 percent), followed by children who were White (50 percent), of Two or more races (44 percent), and Black (24 percent). Also, the percentage of children whose parents had completed a bachelor’s or higher degree was higher for American Indian/Alaska Native children (21 percent) than for

Hispanic children (18 percent); however, the percentages for these two groups were not measurably different from the percentage for Pacific Islander children (18 percent).

In contrast, the percentage of children in 2015 whose parents did not complete high school was highest for Hispanic children (26 percent), followed by American Indian/Alaska Native children (11 percent) and Black children (10 percent). Also, the percentage of children whose parents did not complete high school was higher for Asian children (7 percent) than for children who were of Two or more races (5 percent) and White (4 percent); however, the percentages for these three groups were not measurably different from the percentage for Pacific Islander children (5 percent).

**Figure 2. Percentage of children under age 18, by child’s race/ethnicity and family structure: 2015**



<sup>1</sup> Total includes races/ethnicities not reported separately.

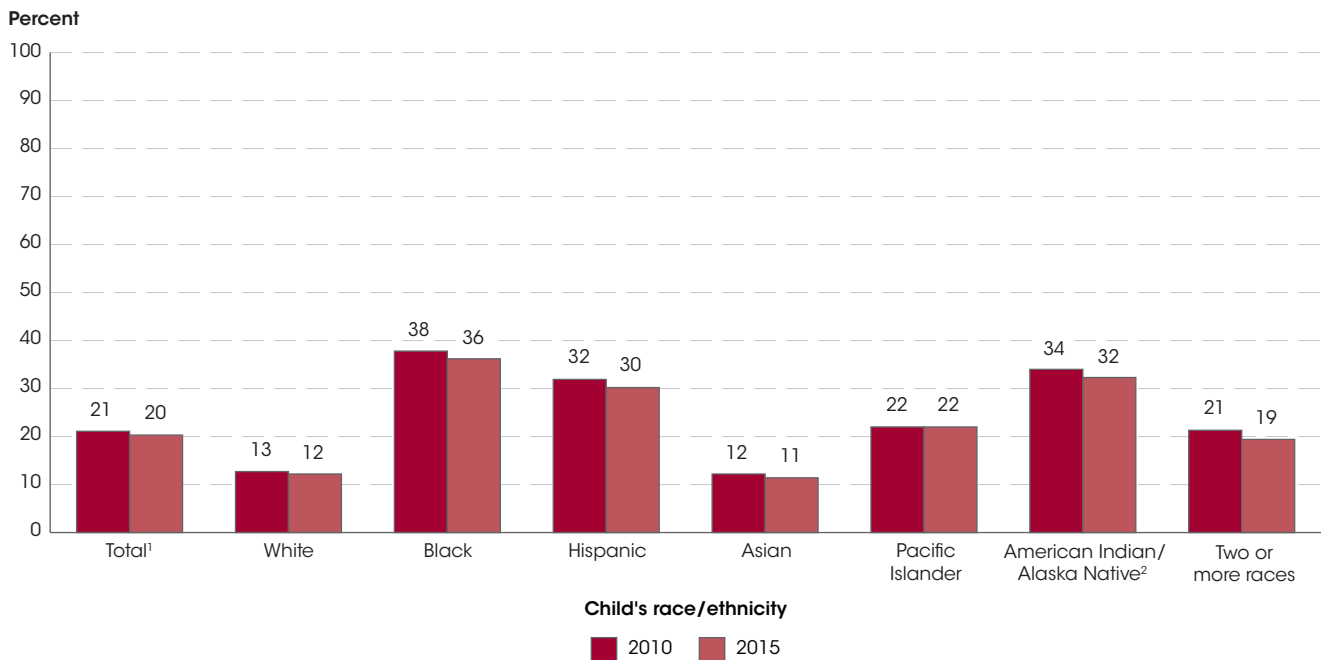
NOTE: Data does not include foster children, children in unrelated subfamilies, children living in group quarters, and children who were reported as the householder or spouse of the householder. A “mother-only household” has a female householder, with no spouse present (i.e., the householder is unmarried or their spouse is not in the household), while a “father-only household” has a male householder, with no spouse present. 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 their parents’ marital status or, if no parents are present in the household, 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. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2015. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 102.20.

In 2015, some 63 percent of children under age 18 lived in married-couple households, 27 percent lived in mother-only households, and 8 percent lived in father-only households.<sup>6</sup> This pattern of a higher percentage of children living in married-couple households than in mother- or father-only households was seen for children

across all racial/ethnic groups, except Black children. Some 57 percent of Black children lived in a mother-only household, compared with 32 percent who lived in a married-couple household and 9 percent who lived in a father-only household.

**Figure 3. Percentage of children under age 18 in families living in poverty, by child’s race/ethnicity: 2010 and 2015**



<sup>1</sup> Total includes races/ethnicities not reported separately.

<sup>2</sup> Includes persons reporting American Indian alone, persons reporting Alaska Native alone, and persons from American Indian and/or Alaska Native tribes specified or not specified.

NOTE: The measure of child poverty includes all children who are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption (except a child who is the spouse of the householder). The householder is the person (or one of the people) who owns or rents (maintains) the housing unit. 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 estimates.

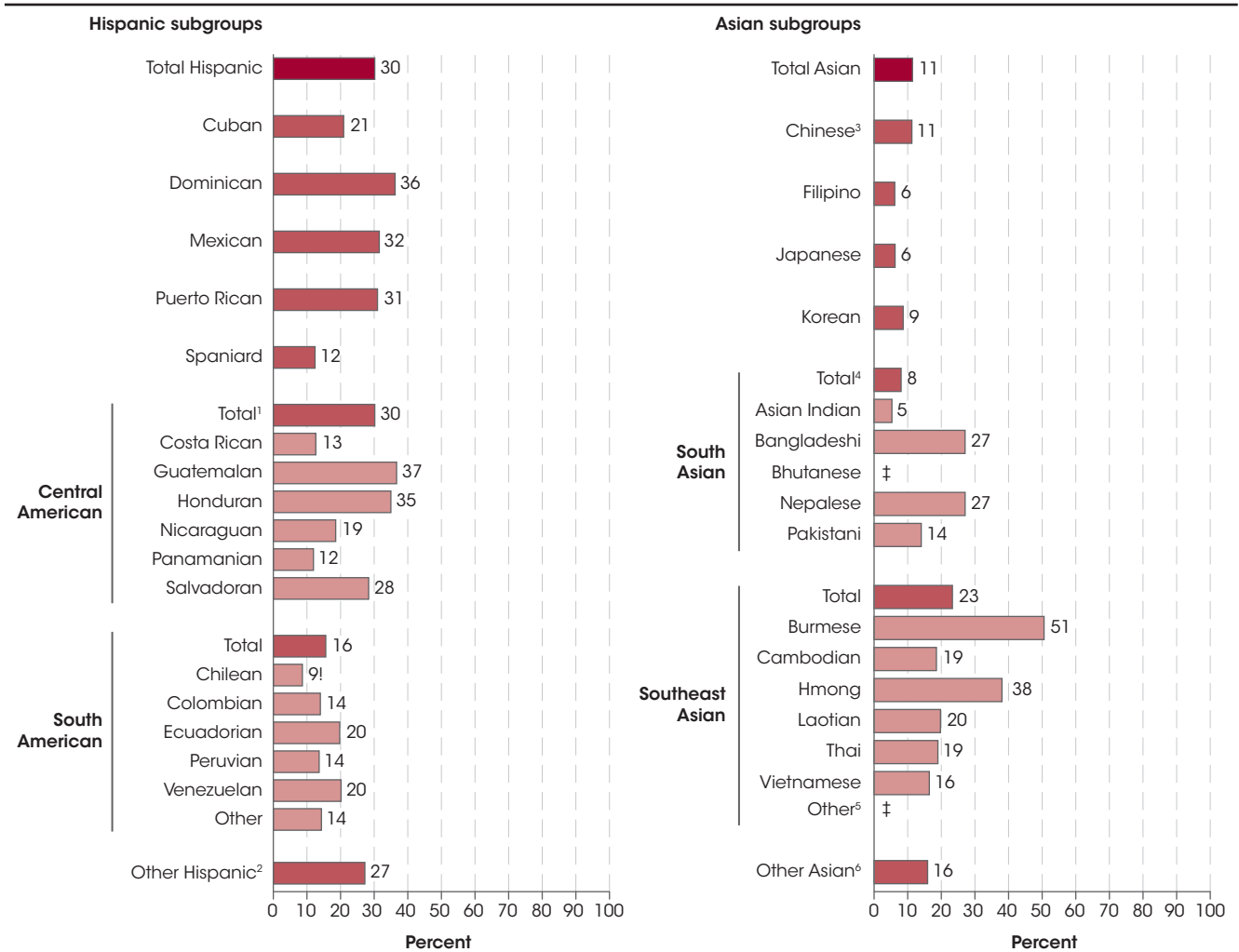
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2010 and 2015. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 102.60.

In 2015, approximately 14.7 million children under age 18 were in families living in poverty.<sup>7</sup> The poverty rate for children in 2015 (20 percent) was lower than in 2010 (21 percent). This pattern was observed for White, Black, and Hispanic children and for children of Two or more races. For example, 30 percent of Hispanic children lived in poverty in 2015, compared with 32 percent in 2010. However, the 2015 poverty rates for Asian, Pacific Islander, and American Indian/Alaska Native children were not measurably different than the rates in 2010.

The poverty rate for children under age 18 varied across racial/ethnic groups. In 2015, the poverty rate was highest for Black children (36 percent), followed by American

Indian/Alaska Native children (32 percent), and then Hispanic children (30 percent). In addition, the poverty rate was higher for Pacific Islander children (22 percent) than for White children (12 percent) and Asian children (11 percent). The rate for Pacific Islander children was not measurably different than the rate for children of Two or more races (19 percent). Compared to the national average (20 percent), Asian and White children had lower poverty rates, while Black, Hispanic, and American Indian/Alaska Native children had rates that were higher than the national average. The poverty rates for Pacific Islander children and children of Two or more races were not measurably different from the national average.

Figure 4. Percentage of children under age 18 in families living in poverty, by selected Hispanic and Asian subgroups: 2015

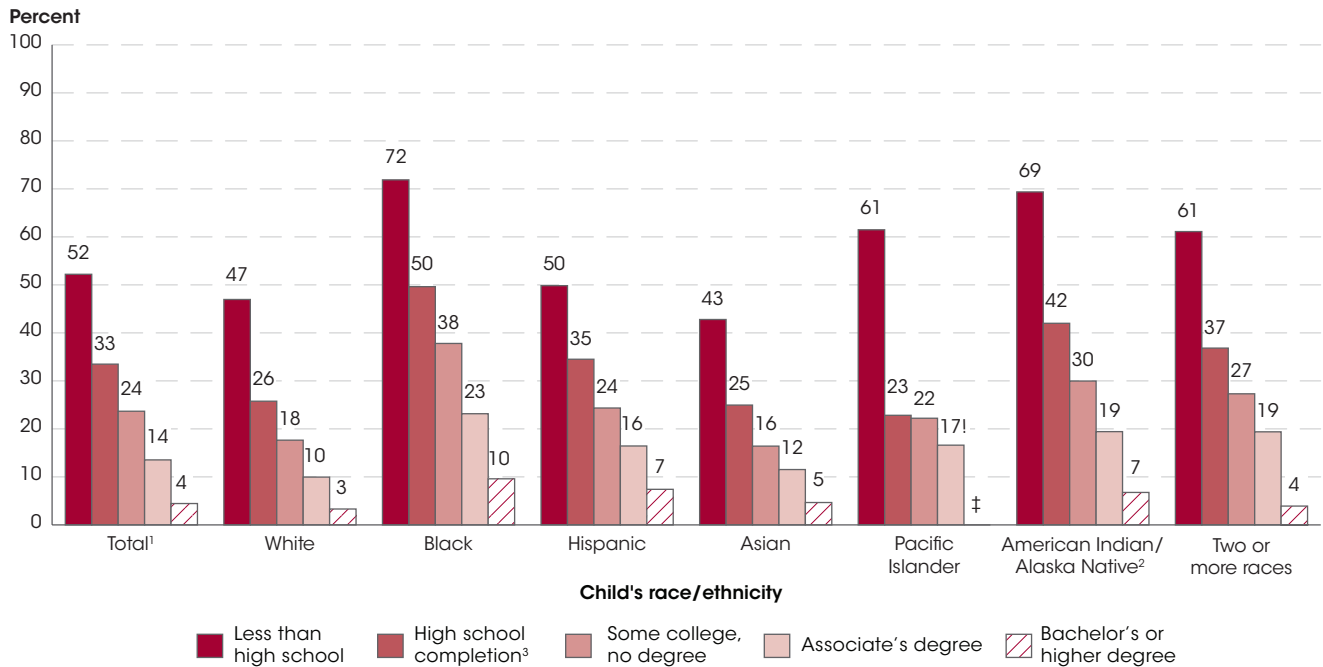


! Interpret data with caution. The coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent.  
 ‡ Reporting standards not met. Either there are too few cases for a reliable estimate or the coefficient of variation (CV) is 50 percent or greater.  
<sup>1</sup> Includes other Central American subgroups not shown separately.  
<sup>2</sup> Includes children from Hispanic countries other than the ones shown.  
<sup>3</sup> Includes Taiwanese.  
<sup>4</sup> In addition to the South Asian subgroups shown, also includes Sri Lankan.  
<sup>5</sup> Includes children from Indonesia and Malaysia.  
<sup>6</sup> Includes children from Asian countries other than the ones shown.  
 NOTE: The national poverty rate average was 20 percent in 2015. The measure of child poverty includes all children who are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption (except a child who is the spouse of the householder). The householder is the person (or one of the people) who owns or rents (maintains) the housing unit. For additional information about poverty status, see <https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/poverty/guidance/poverty-measures.html>.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2014. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 102.60.

In 2015, the overall poverty rate for Hispanic children under age 18 (30 percent) was higher than the national average of 20 percent. However, there was a range of rates among Hispanic subgroups, with some rates being lower or higher than the national average. For example, the poverty rates for Chilean children (9 percent) as well as Panamanian and Spaniard children (12 percent each) were lower than the national average, while the rates for Guatemalan children (37 percent) and Dominican children (36 percent) were higher than the national average.

The overall poverty rate for Asian children under age 18 in 2015 (11 percent) was lower than the national average, but there was a range of rates among Asian subgroups, with some rates being lower or higher than the national average. For example, the poverty rates for Asian Indian (5 percent), Filipino (6 percent), and Japanese children (6 percent) were lower than the national average, while the rates for Burmese (51 percent) and Hmong children (38 percent) were higher than the national average. For additional information about racial/ethnic subgroups, please refer to the *Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups* report.

**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: 2015**



! 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.

<sup>1</sup> Total includes race/ethnicities not reported separately.

<sup>2</sup> Includes persons reporting American Indian alone, persons reporting Alaska Native alone, and persons from American Indian and/or Alaska Native tribes specified or not specified.

<sup>3</sup> Includes parents who completed high school through equivalency programs, such as a GED program.

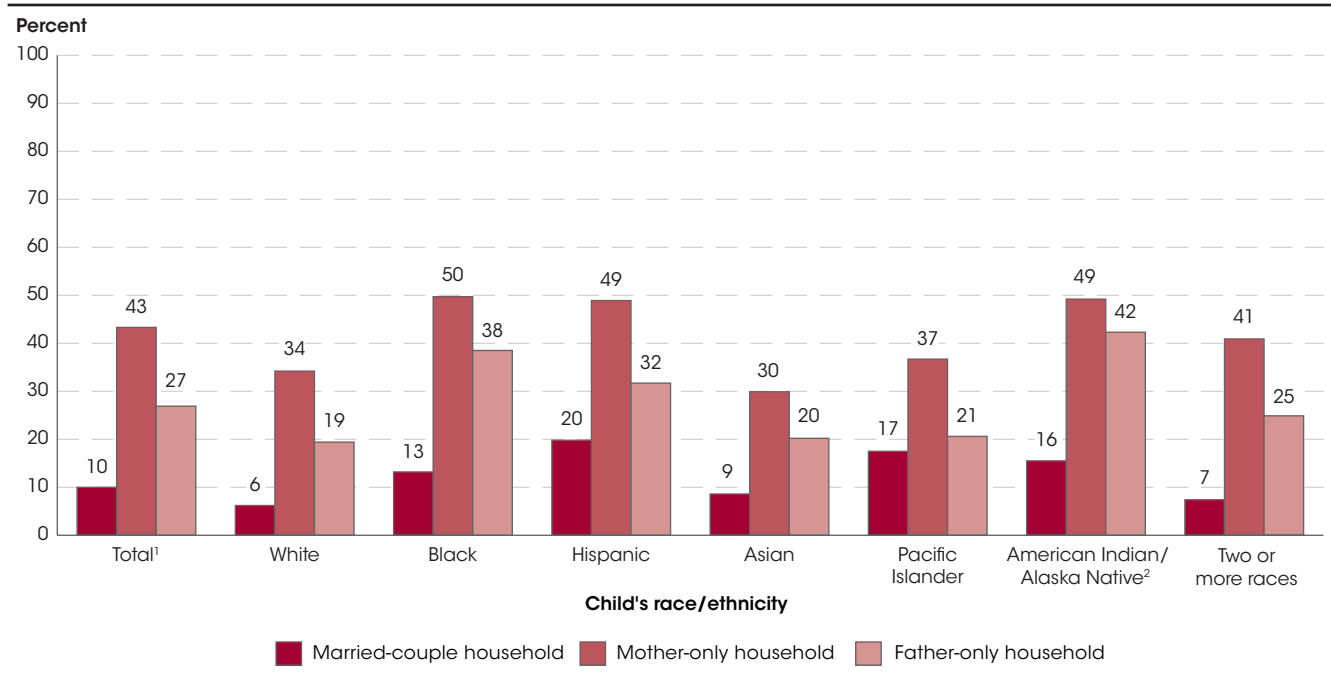
NOTE: Parents’ highest level of educational attainment is the highest level of education attained by any parent residing in the same household as the child. Parents include adoptive and stepparents but exclude parents not residing in the same household as their child. The measure of child poverty includes all children who are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption (except a child who is the spouse of the householder). The householder is the person (or one of the people) who owns or rents (maintains) the housing unit. 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.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2015. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 102.62.

In 2015, the poverty rate for children under age 18 was highest for those whose parents had not completed high school (52 percent) and lowest for those whose parents had attained a bachelor’s or higher degree (4 percent). The pattern of higher poverty rates for children whose parents had lower levels of educational attainment was observed

across most racial/ethnic groups. For example, the poverty rate among Asian children was highest for those whose parents had not completed high school (43 percent) and lowest for those whose parents had attained a bachelor’s degree or higher (5 percent).

**Figure 6. Percentage of children under age 18 in families living in poverty, by child’s race/ethnicity and family structure: 2015**



<sup>1</sup> Total includes races/ethnicities not reported separately.

<sup>2</sup> Includes persons reporting American Indian alone, persons reporting Alaska Native alone, and persons from American Indian and/or Alaska Native tribes specified or not specified.

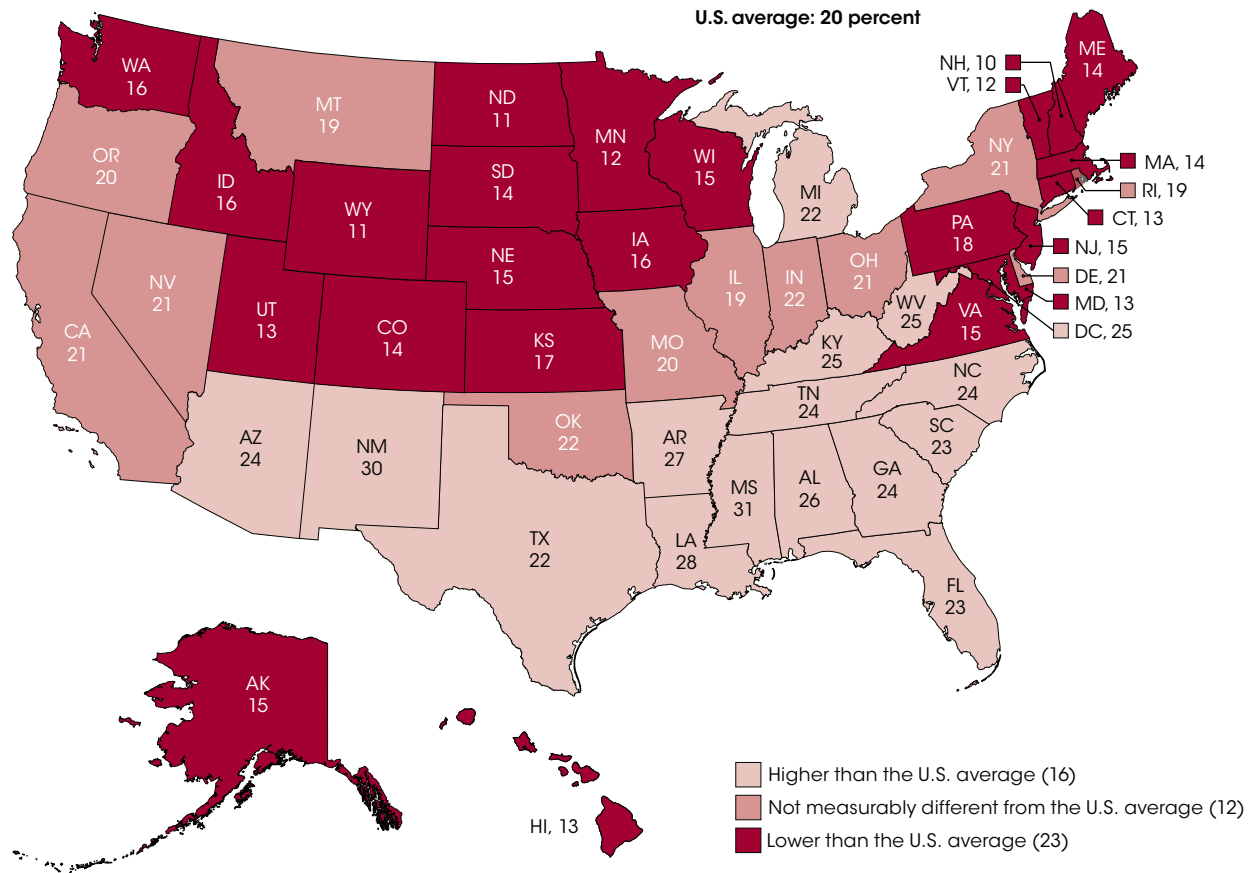
NOTE: A “mother-only household” has a female householder, with no spouse present (i.e., the householder is unmarried or their spouse is not in the household), while a “father-only household” has a male householder, with no spouse present. Includes all children who live either with their parent(s) or 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 their parents’ marital status or, if no parents are present in the household, 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. 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.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2015. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 102.60.

For children under age 18 in 2015, those living in a mother-only household had the highest poverty rate (43 percent) and those living in a father-only household had the next-highest rate (27 percent). Children living in a married-couple household had the lowest poverty rate, at 10 percent. This pattern of children living in married-couple households having the lowest rate of poverty was observed across most racial/ethnic groups. For example,

among Black children the poverty rates were 50 percent for those living in a mother-only household, 38 percent for those living in a father-only household, and 13 percent for those living in a married-couple household. The exception is that the apparent difference between the poverty rates for Pacific Islander children in a married-couple household and those in a father-only household was not statistically significant.

Figure 7. Percentage of children under age 18 in families living in poverty, by state: 2015



NOTE: The measure of child poverty includes all children who are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption (except a child who is the spouse of the householder). The householder is the person (or one of the people) who owns or rents (maintains) the housing unit. For additional information about poverty status, see <https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/poverty/guidance/poverty-measures.html>. Categorizations are based on unrounded percentages.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2015. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 102.40.

While the national average poverty rate for children under age 18 was 20 percent in 2015, the poverty rates among states ranged from 10 percent in New Hampshire to 31 percent in Mississippi. Twenty-three states had poverty rates for children that were lower than the national average, 15 states and the District of Columbia had rates that were higher than the national average, and 12 states had rates that were not measurably different from the

national average. Of the 16 jurisdictions (15 states and the District of Columbia) that had poverty rates higher than the national average, the majority (13) were located in the South. In 10 states, the poverty rates were lower in 2015 than in 2010. In the remaining 40 states and the District of Columbia, there was no measurable difference between the poverty rates in 2010 and 2015.

**Endnotes:**

<sup>1</sup> Pungello, E., Kainz, K., Burchinal, M., Wasik, B., Sparling, J.J., Ramey, C.T., and Campbell, F.A. (2010, January). 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 February 7, 2017, from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2009.01403.x/full>.

<sup>2</sup> 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 February 7, 2017, from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubinfo.asp?pubid=2012046>.

<sup>3</sup> In this indicator, “parents’ highest level of educational attainment” is the highest level of education attained by any parent residing in the same household as the child.

<sup>4</sup> Includes parents who had completed professional degrees.

<sup>5</sup> Includes parents who completed high school through equivalency programs, such as a GED program.

<sup>6</sup> A “mother-only household” has a female householder, with no spouse present (i.e., the householder is unmarried or their spouse

is not in the household) while a “father-only household” has a male householder, with no spouse present. 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 their parents’ marital status or, if no parents are present in the household, 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.

<sup>7</sup> 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 2015, the poverty threshold for a family of four with two related children under 18 years old was \$24,036 (<http://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/tables/time-series/historical-poverty-thresholds/thresh15.xls>).

**Reference tables:** *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, tables 102.20, 102.40, 102.60, 102.62, and 104.70

**Related indicators and resources:** 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*], Risk Factors and Academic Outcomes in Kindergarten Through Third Grade [*The Condition of Education 2017 Spotlight*]

**Glossary:** Associate’s degree, Bachelor’s degree, College, Doctor’s degree, Educational attainment, High school completer, Household, Master’s degree, Poverty (official measure), Racial/ethnic group