

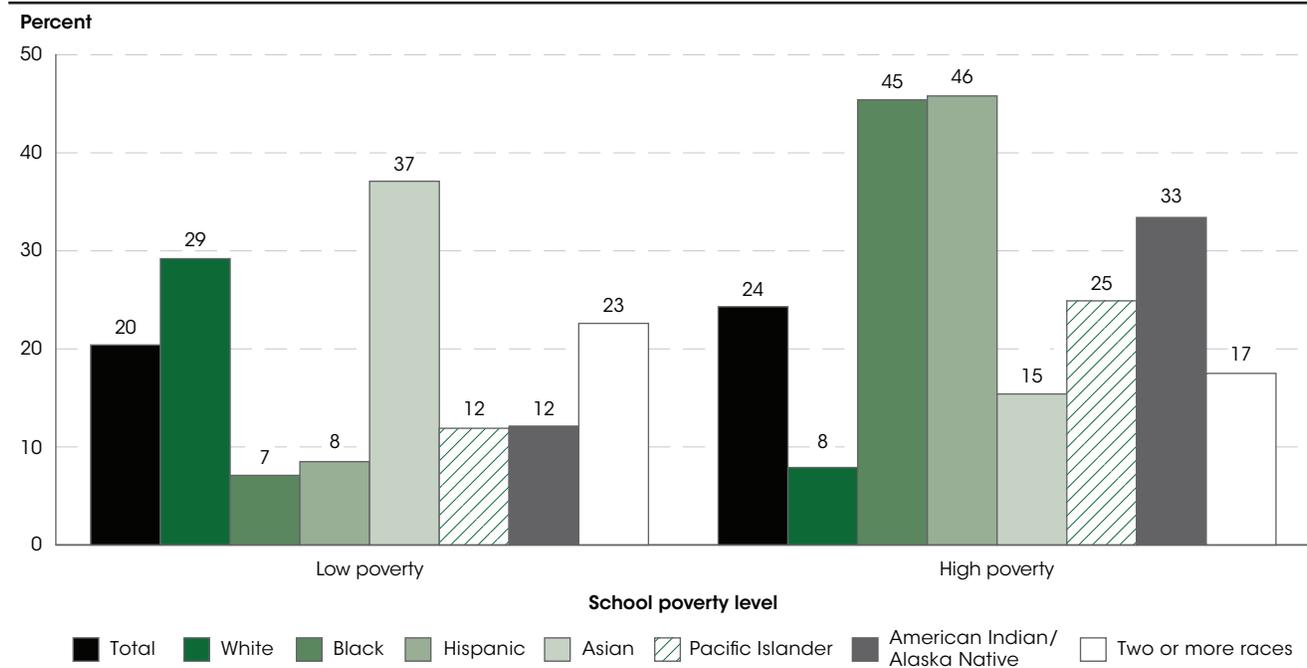
Concentration of Public School Students Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

In school year 2014–15, nearly half of Hispanic and Black public school students, one-third of American Indian/Alaska Native students, and one-quarter of Pacific Islander students attended high-poverty schools. In contrast, 17 percent of students of Two or more races, 15 percent of Asian students, and 8 percent of White students attended high-poverty schools.

The percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL) under the National School Lunch Program provides a proxy measure for the concentration of low-income students within a school.¹ In this indicator, public schools (including both traditional and charter) are divided into categories by FRPL eligibility. High-poverty schools are defined as public schools where more than 75.0 percent of the students are eligible for FRPL, and mid-high poverty schools as those where

50.1 to 75.0 percent of the students are eligible for FRPL. Low-poverty schools are defined as public schools where 25.0 percent or less of the students are eligible for FRPL, and mid-low poverty schools as those where 25.1 to 50.0 percent of the students are eligible for FRPL. In school year 2014–15, some 20 percent of public school students attended low-poverty schools, and 24 percent of public school students attended high-poverty schools.

Figure 1. Percentage of public school students in low-poverty and high-poverty schools, by race/ethnicity: School year 2014–15



NOTE: High-poverty schools are defined as public schools where more than 75.0 percent of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL), and low-poverty schools are defined as public schools where 25.0 percent or less of the students are eligible for FRPL. For more information on eligibility for FRPL and its relationship to poverty, see NCES blog post “Free or reduced price lunch: A proxy for poverty?” Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), “Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey,” 2014–15. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 216.60.

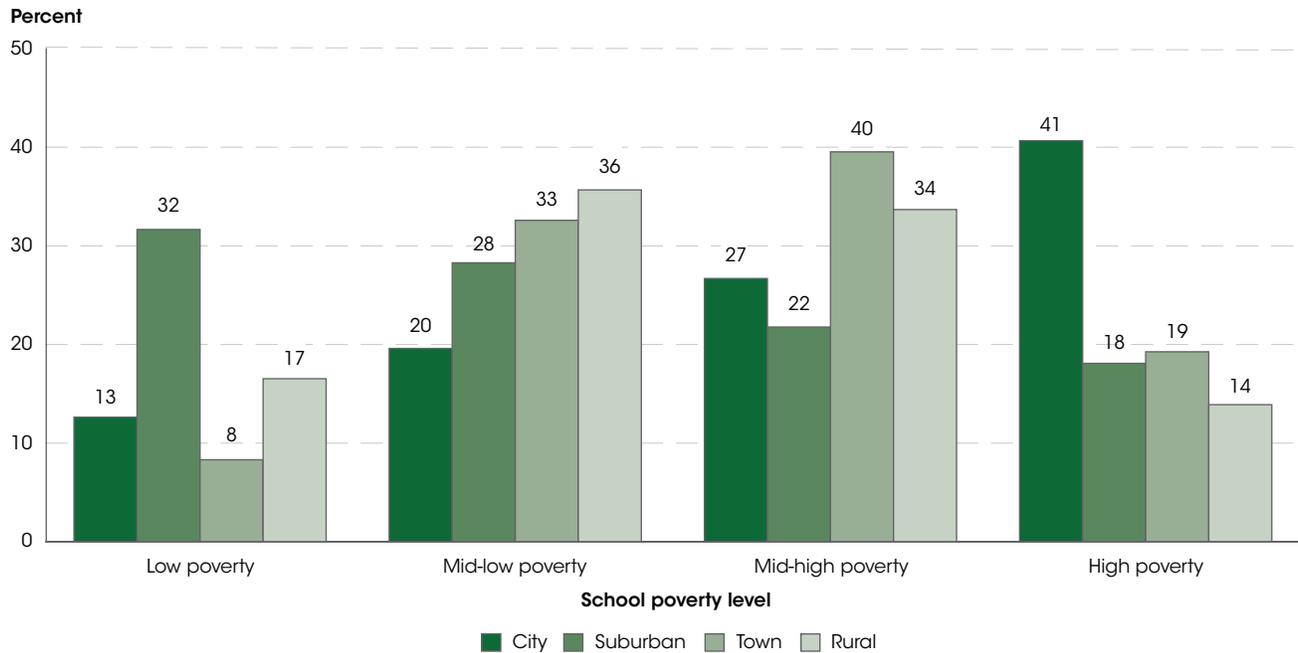
While the overall percentages of public school students in low- and high-poverty schools were similar (20 and 24 percent, respectively), they varied by race/ethnicity. In school year 2014–15, the percentages of Asian students (37 percent), White students (29 percent), and students of

Two or more races (23 percent) who attended low-poverty schools were higher than the national average (20 percent), while the percentages of American Indian/Alaska Native (12 percent), Pacific Islander (12 percent), Hispanic (8 percent), and Black (7 percent) students who attended

low-poverty schools were lower than the national average. In contrast, the percentages of Hispanic (46 percent), Black (45 percent), American Indian/Alaska Native (33 percent), and Pacific Islander students (25 percent) who attended high-poverty schools were higher than the

national average (24 percent), while the percentages of students of Two or more races (17 percent), Asian students (15 percent), and White students (8 percent) who attended high-poverty schools were lower than the national average.

Figure 2. Percentage of public school students, by school poverty level and school locale: School year 2014-15



NOTE: This figure does not include schools for which information on free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL) is missing or schools that did not participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). High-poverty schools are defined as public schools where more than 75.0 percent of the students are eligible for FRPL, and mid-high poverty schools are those schools where 50.1 to 75.0 percent of the students are eligible for FRPL. Low-poverty schools are defined as public schools where 25.0 percent or less of the students are eligible for FRPL, and mid-low poverty schools are those schools where 25.1 to 50.0 percent of the students are eligible for FRPL. For more information on eligibility for FRPL and its relationship to poverty, see NCES blog post “Free or reduced price lunch: A proxy for poverty?” Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), “Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey,” 2014–15. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 216.60.

The distribution of public schools at different poverty concentrations varied by school locale (i.e., city, suburb, town, or rural). In school year 2014–15, a majority of students attending city (67 percent) and town (59 percent) schools were in a high-poverty or mid-high poverty school while a majority of students attending suburban (60 percent) and rural (52 percent) schools were in a low-poverty or mid-low poverty school. Some 41 percent of students attending city schools were in a high-poverty school, compared with 19 percent of students attending town schools, 18 percent of students attending

suburban schools, and 14 percent of students attending rural schools. In contrast, the percentage of students attending suburban schools who were in a low-poverty school (32 percent) was about four times as large as the corresponding percentage of students attending town schools (8 percent). The percentage of students attending suburban schools who were in a low-poverty school was also higher than the percentages of students attending city and rural schools who were in a low-poverty school (13 and 17 percent, respectively).

Endnotes:

¹ For more information on eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch and its relationship to poverty, see NCES blog post “Free or reduced price lunch: A proxy for poverty?”

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 216.60

Related indicators and resources: Characteristics of Children’s Families, Characteristics of Traditional Public Schools and Public Charter Schools, Reading Performance, Mathematics Performance, Science Performance, Technology and Engineering Literacy

Glossary: Free or reduced-price lunch, Locale codes, National School Lunch Program, Public school or institution, Racial/ethnic group