

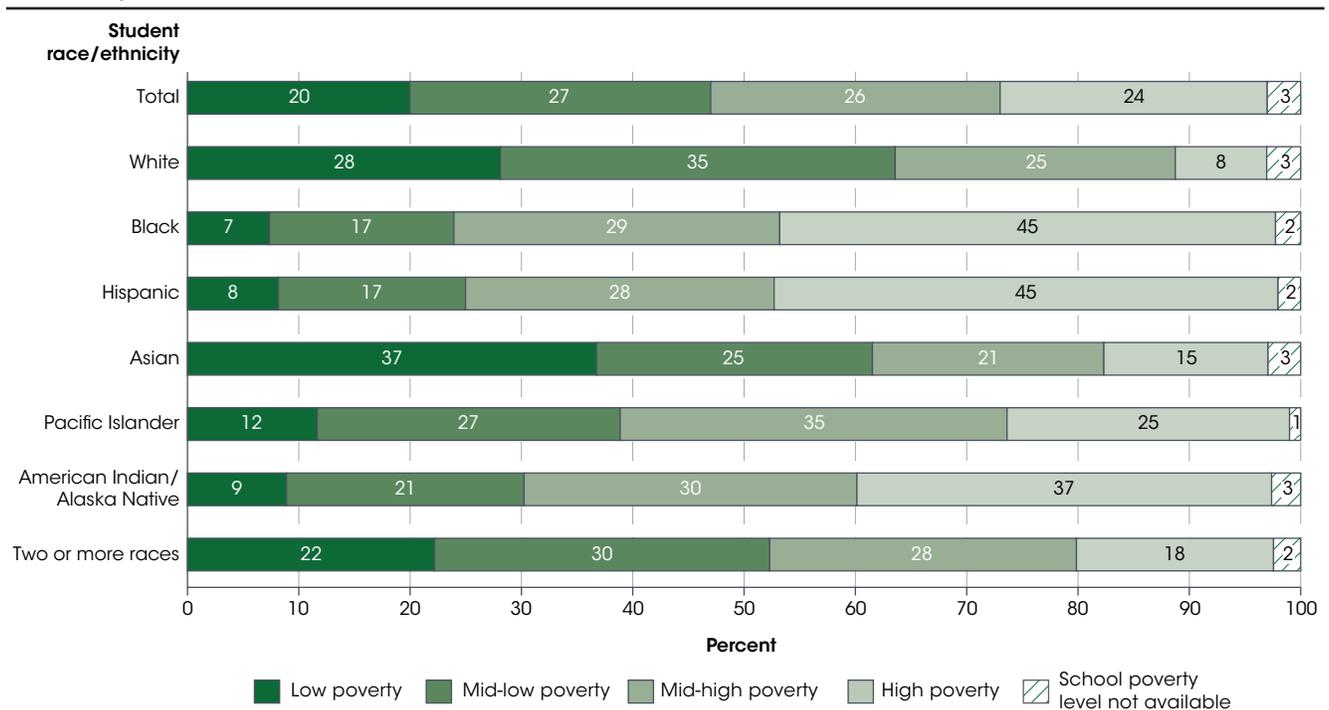
Concentration of Public School Students Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

Higher percentages of Hispanic (45 percent), Black (45 percent), American Indian/Alaska Native (37 percent), and Pacific Islander (25 percent) students attended high-poverty schools than of White students (8 percent) in school year 2015–16. The percentages of students of Two or more races (18 percent) and Asian students (15 percent) in high-poverty schools were higher than the percentage for White students but lower than the national average (24 percent).

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 schools² (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 2015–16, 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 distribution of public school students, by student race/ethnicity and school poverty level: School year 2015–16

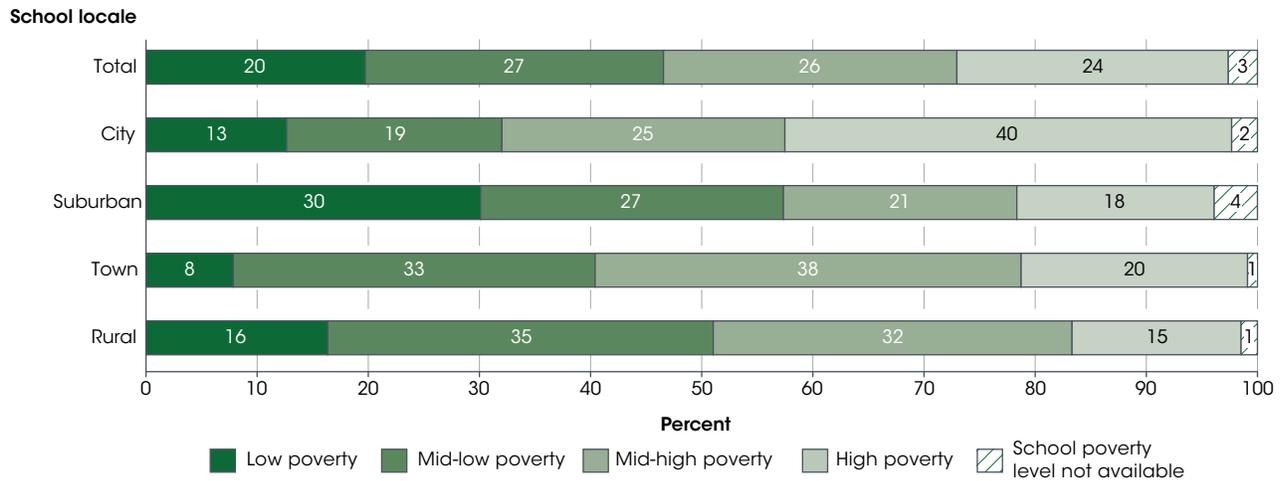


NOTE: Low-poverty schools are defined as public schools where 25.0 percent or less of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL), and mid-low poverty schools are those schools where 25.1 to 50.0 percent of the students are eligible for FRPL. High-poverty schools are defined as public 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. "School poverty level not available" includes schools for which information on FRPL is missing and schools that did not participate in the National School Lunch Program. 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. Detail may not sum to 100 percent 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," 2015–16. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, 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 2015–16, the percentages of Asian students (37 percent), White students (28 percent), and students of Two or more races (22 percent) who attended low-poverty schools were greater than the national average (20 percent), while the percentages of Pacific Islander (12 percent), American Indian/Alaska Native (9 percent), Hispanic (8 percent), and Black (7 percent) students

who attended low-poverty schools were less than the national average. In contrast, the percentages of Hispanic (45 percent), Black (45 percent), American Indian/Alaska Native (37 percent), and Pacific Islander students (25 percent) who attended high-poverty schools were greater than the national average (24 percent), while the percentages of students of Two or more races (18 percent), Asian students (15 percent), and White students (8 percent) who attended high-poverty schools were less than the national average.

Figure 2. Percentage distribution of public school students, by school locale and school poverty level: School year 2015–16



NOTE: Low-poverty schools are defined as public schools where 25.0 percent or less of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL), and mid-low poverty schools are those schools where 25.1 to 50.0 percent of the students are eligible for FRPL. 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. "School poverty level not available" includes schools for which information on FRPL is missing and schools that did not participate in the National School Lunch Program. 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 100 percent 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," 2015–16. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, table 216.60.

The percentage of students attending public schools with different poverty concentrations varied by school locale (i.e., city, suburb, town, or rural). In school year 2015–16, some 40 percent of students attending city schools were in a high-poverty school, compared with 20 percent of students attending town schools, 18 percent of students attending suburban schools, and 15 percent of students attending rural schools. In contrast, the percentage

of students attending suburban schools who were in a low-poverty school (30 percent) was nearly four times as large as the corresponding percentage for students attending town schools (8 percent). The percentage of students attending suburban schools who were in a low-poverty school was also greater than the corresponding percentages of students attending rural and city schools (16 and 13 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?](#)"

² In 2015–16, information on school poverty level is not available for 3 percent of public school students. This includes schools for which information on FRPL is missing and schools that did not participate in the National School Lunch Program.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, table 216.60

Related indicators and resources: [Characteristics of Children's Families](#); [Mathematics Performance](#); [Reading Performance](#)

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