

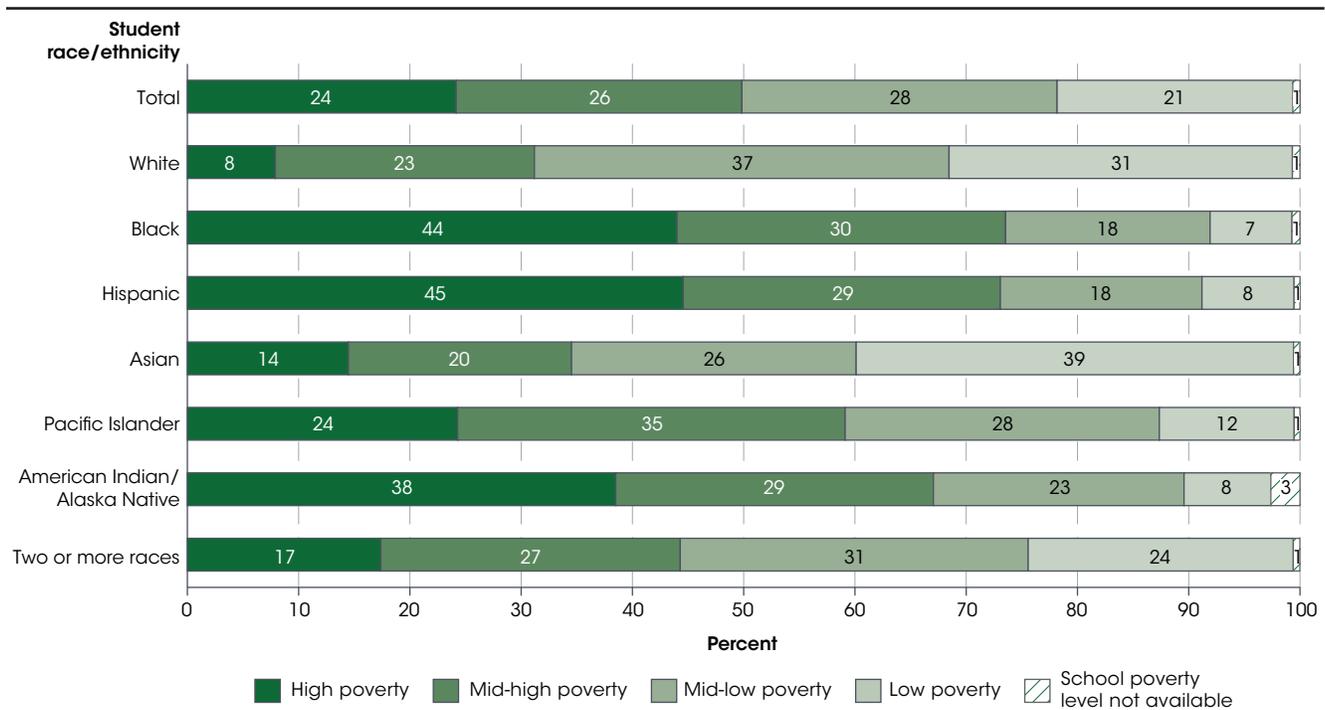
Concentration of Public School Students Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

In fall 2016, the percentage of students who attended high-poverty schools was highest for Hispanic students (45 percent), followed by Black students (44 percent), American Indian/Alaska Native students (38 percent), Pacific Islander students (24 percent), students of Two or more races (17 percent), Asian students (14 percent), and White students (8 percent).

In the United States (defined as the 50 states and the District of Columbia in this indicator), 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.³ Low-poverty schools are

defined as public schools where 25.0 percent or less of the students are eligible for FRPL; mid-low poverty schools are those where 25.1 to 50.0 percent of the students are eligible for FRPL; mid-high poverty schools are those where 50.1 to 75.0 percent of the students are eligible for FRPL; and high-poverty schools are those where more than 75.0 percent of the students are eligible for FRPL.

Figure 1. Percentage distribution of public school students, for each racial and ethnic group, by school poverty level: Fall 2016

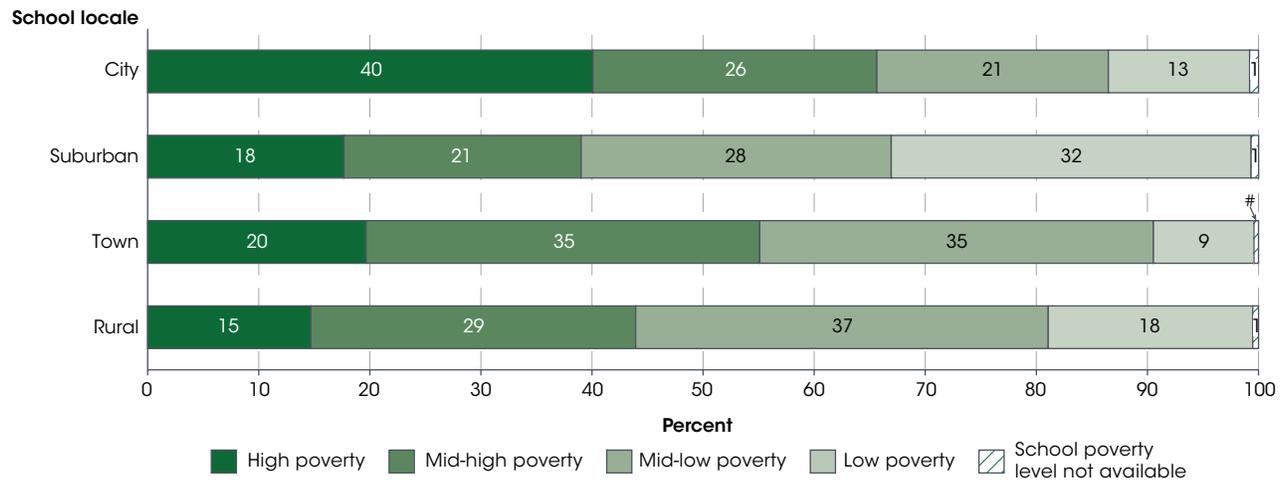


NOTE: High-poverty schools are defined as public schools where more than 75.0 percent of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL); mid-high poverty schools are those where 50.1 to 75.0 percent of the students are eligible for FRPL; mid-low poverty schools are those where 25.1 to 50.0 percent of the students are eligible for FRPL; and low-poverty schools are those where 25.0 percent or less 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 (NSLP). Data include students whose NSLP eligibility has been determined through direct certification. For more information on eligibility for FRPL and its relationship to poverty, see the NCES blog post "Free or reduced price lunch: A proxy for poverty?" Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey," 2016-17. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, table 216.60.

In fall 2016, the percentage of public school students in high-poverty schools was higher than the percentage in low-poverty schools (24 vs. 21 percent), and both percentages varied by race/ethnicity. The percentage of students who attended high-poverty schools was highest for Hispanic students (45 percent), followed by Black students (44 percent), American Indian/Alaska Native students (38 percent), Pacific Islander students (24 percent), students of Two or more races (17 percent),

Asian students (14 percent), and White students (8 percent). In contrast, the percentage of students who attended low-poverty schools was higher for Asian students (39 percent), White students (31 percent), and students of Two or more races (24 percent) than for Pacific Islander students (12 percent), Hispanic students (8 percent), American Indian/Alaska Native students (8 percent), and Black students (7 percent).

Figure 2. Percentage distribution of public school students, for each school locale, by school poverty level: Fall 2016



Rounds to zero.

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); mid-high poverty schools are those where 50.1 to 75.0 percent of the students are eligible for FRPL; mid-low poverty schools are those where 25.1 to 50.0 percent of the students are eligible for FRPL; and low-poverty schools are those where 25.0 percent or less 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 (NSLP). Data include students whose NSLP eligibility has been determined through direct certification. For more information on eligibility for FRPL and its relationship to poverty, see the NCES blog post "Free or reduced price lunch: A proxy for poverty?" Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey," 2016–17. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, table 216.60.

The percentage of students attending public schools with different poverty concentrations varied by school locale (i.e., city, suburban, town, or rural). In fall 2016, about 40 percent of students who attended city schools were in high-poverty schools, compared with 20 percent of students who attended town schools, 18 percent of students who attended suburban schools, and 15 percent of students who attended rural schools. In contrast, the

percentage of students who attended suburban schools who were in low-poverty schools (32 percent) was more than three times as large as the corresponding percentage of students who attended town schools (9 percent). The percentage of students who attended low-poverty suburban schools was also higher than the percentages of students who attended low-poverty rural schools and city schools (18 and 13 percent, respectively).

Endnotes:

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

² In fall 2016, information on school poverty level was not available for 1 percent of public school students. This included

schools for which information on FRPL was missing and schools that did not participate in the National School Lunch Program.

³ Includes students whose National School Lunch Program (NSLP) eligibility has been determined through direct certification.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2018 and 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