



## Basic Facts about Low-Income Children

### *Children 6 through 11 Years, 2014*

Yang Jiang | Mercedes Ekono | Curtis Skinner

February 2016

Children under 18 years represent 23 percent of the population, but they comprise 32 percent of all people in poverty. Many more children live in families with incomes just above the poverty threshold.<sup>1</sup> Among all children, 44 percent live in low-income families and approximately one in every five (21 percent) live in poor families. Similarly, among children age 6 through 11 years in middle childhood, 45 percent live in low-income families and 22 percent live in poor families. Being a child in a low-income or poor family does not happen by chance. Parental education and employment, race/ethnicity, and other factors are associated with children's experience of economic insecurity. This fact sheet describes the demographic, socioeconomic, and employment characteristics of children in middle childhood and their parents. It highlights the important factors that appear to distinguish low-income and poor children in this age group from their less disadvantaged counterparts.



### National Center for Children in Poverty

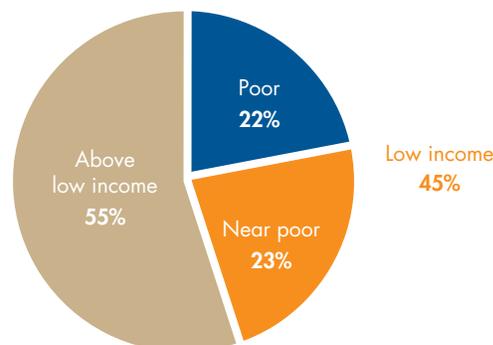
Mailman School of Public Health  
Columbia University

### How many children in middle childhood, ages 6 through 11 years, live in low-income families in the United States?

There are more than 24 million children in middle childhood age 6 through 11 years in the United States.

- ◆ 45 percent—10.8 million—live in low-income families
- ◆ 22 percent—5.4 million—live in poor families

*Figure 1: Children by family income, 2014*



Note: Above low income is defined as at or above 200% of the federal poverty threshold (FPT), poor is defined as below 100% of FPT, and near poor is between 100% and 199% of the FPT. The low-income category includes both the poor and the near poor.

Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

215 W. 125th Street, 3rd Floor  
New York, NY 10027-4426  
Ph. 646-284-9600

[www.nccp.org](http://www.nccp.org)

**What is the 2014 federal poverty threshold (FPT)?<sup>2</sup>**

- ◆ \$24,008 for a family of four with two children
- ◆ \$19,055 for a family of three with one child
- ◆ \$16,317 for a family of two with one child

**Is a poverty-level income enough to support a family?**

Research suggests that, on average, families need an income equal to about two times the federal poverty threshold to meet their most basic needs.<sup>3</sup> Families with incomes below this level, such as families making below the following incomes, are referred to as low income:

- ◆ \$48,016 for a family of four with two children
- ◆ \$38,110 for a family of three with one child
- ◆ \$32,634 for a family of two with one child

These dollar amounts approximate the average minimum income families need to make ends meet, but actual expenses vary greatly by locality. In 2014, the cost of meeting basic needs for a family of four required about \$85,800 per year in Boston, Massachusetts; \$61,500 in Akron, Ohio; \$57,200 in Tulsa, Oklahoma; and \$53,600 in McAllen, Texas.<sup>4</sup>

**Has the percentage of children in middle childhood living in low-income and poor families changed over time?**

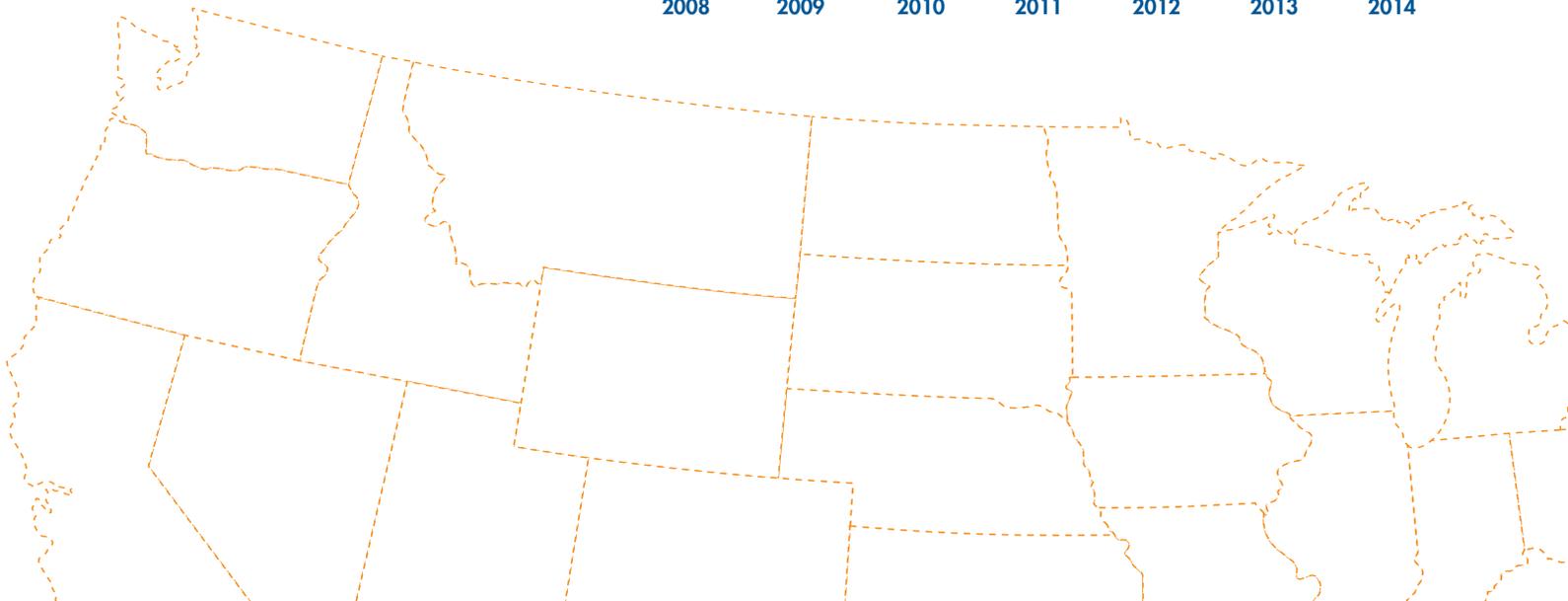
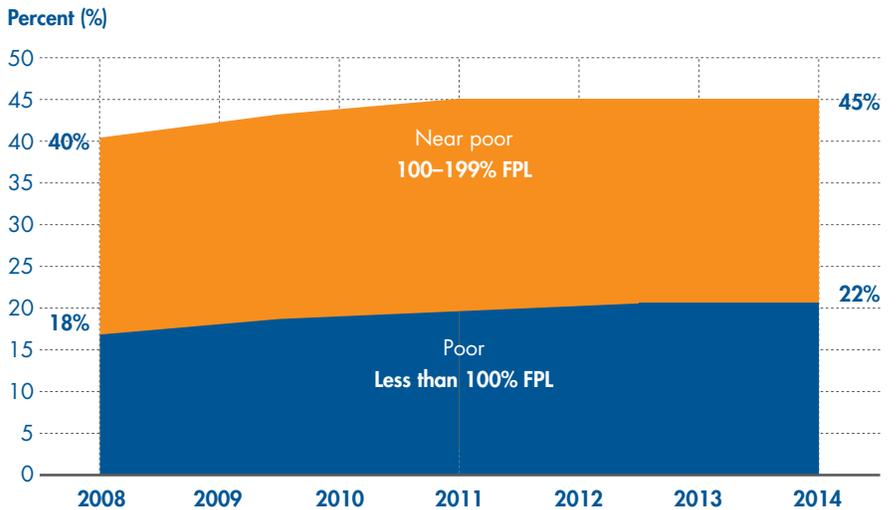
The percentage of children in middle childhood living in low-income families (both poor and near poor) has been *on the rise*—increasing from 40 percent in 2008 to 45 percent in 2014 (Figure 2). During this time

period, the overall number of children in middle childhood increased by three percent while the numbers that were low-income and poor increased by 16 percent and 26 percent, respectively (Table 1).

**Table 1:** Percentage change of children in middle childhood living in low-income and poor families, 2008–2014

	2008	2014	Percent change
<b>Low income</b>	<b>9,364,013</b>	<b>10,838,631</b>	<b>16%</b>
<b>Poor</b>	<b>4,250,047</b>	<b>5,369,628</b>	<b>26%</b>

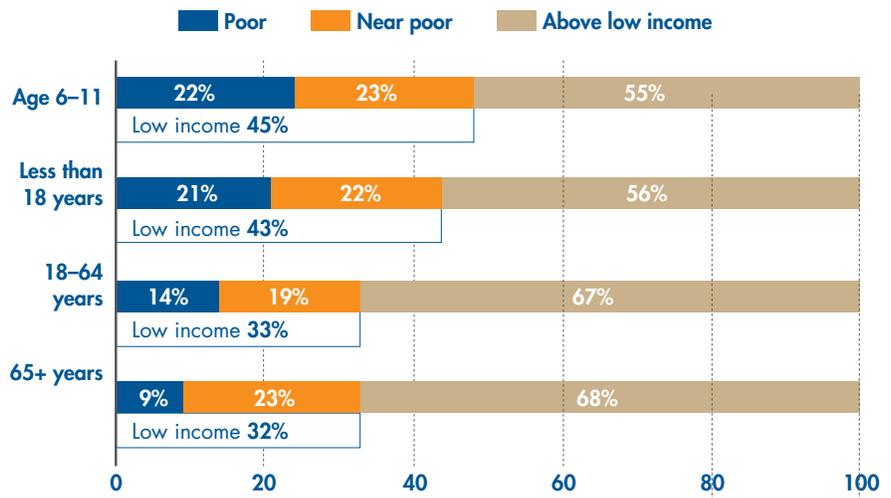
**Figure 2:** Children age 6 through 11 years living in low-income and poor families, 2008–2014



## How do children in middle childhood compare to the rest of the population?

The percentage of children in middle childhood in low-income families surpasses that of adults. In addition, children in this age group are more than twice as likely as adults 65 years and older to live in poor families (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Family income by age, 2014



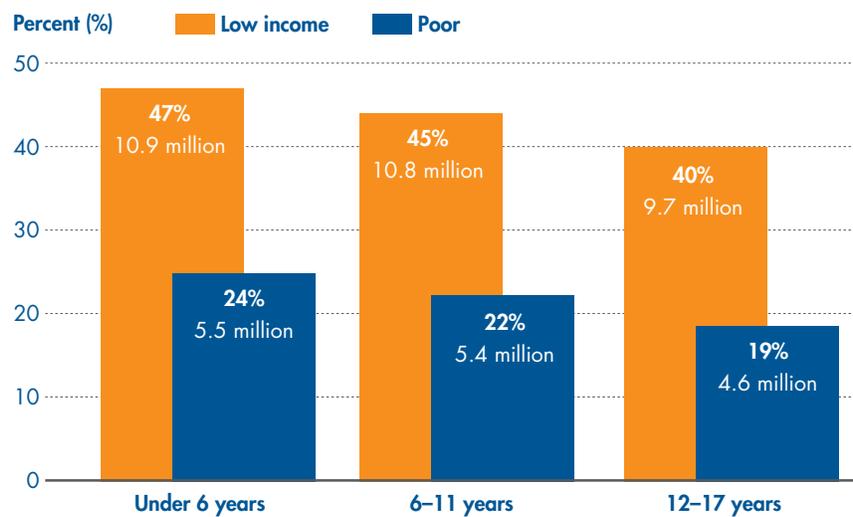
Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

## Does the percentage of children in low-income families vary by children's age?

The overall percentages of children under 18 years who live in low-income and poor families vary by age group. Young children under age 6 years are the most likely to live in low-income families, followed by children age 6 through 11 years, and children age 12 through 17 years (Figure 4).

- ◆ 47 percent of children under age 6 years—10.9 million—live in low-income families
- ◆ 45 percent of children age 6 through 11 years—10.8 million—live in low-income families
- ◆ 40 percent of children age 12 through 17 years—9.7 million—live in low-income families

Figure 4: Percentage of children in low-income and poor families by age, 2014



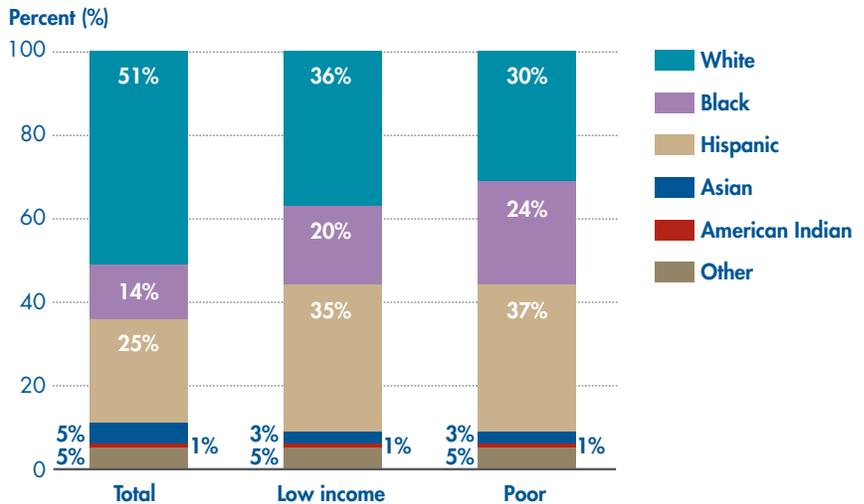
## Does the percentage of children in middle childhood in low-income families vary by race/ethnicity?

As Figure 5 illustrates, the percentages of low-income and poor children vary by race and ethnicity: whites comprise the largest share of low-income children age 6 through 11 (36 percent) and Hispanics represent the largest share of poor children in this age group (37 percent).<sup>5</sup>

Black, American Indian, and Hispanic children in middle childhood are disproportionately low income and poor (Figure 6).

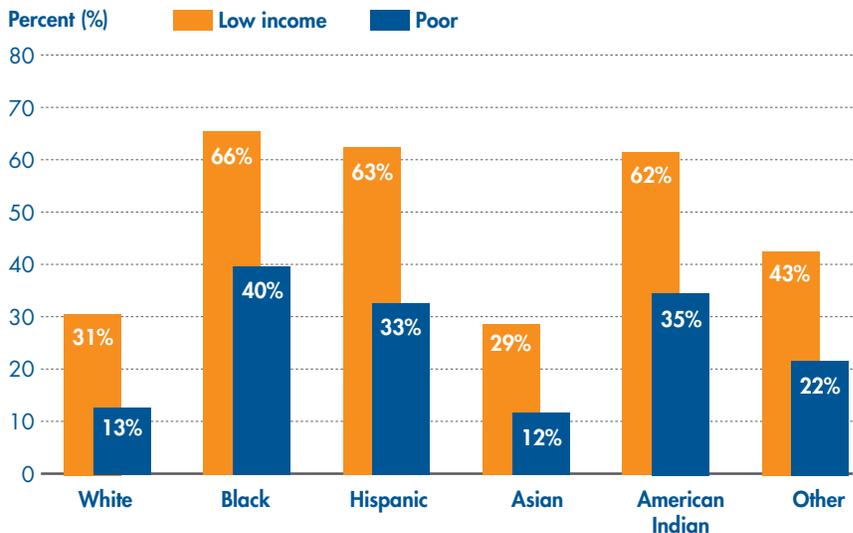
- ◆ 66 percent of black children in middle childhood—2.2 million—live in low-income families
- ◆ 63 percent of Hispanic children in middle childhood—3.8 million—live in low-income families
- ◆ 62 percent of American Indian children in middle childhood—0.1 million—live in low-income families
- ◆ 31 percent of white children in middle childhood—3.9 million—live in low-income families
- ◆ 29 percent of Asian children in middle childhood—0.3 million—live in low-income families
- ◆ 43 percent of children in middle childhood of some other race—0.5 million—live in low-income families

**Figure 5:** Race/ethnicity among children age 6 through 11 years by family income, 2014



Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

**Figure 6:** Percentage of children age 6 through 11 years in low-income and poor families by race/ethnicity, 2014



## Does the percentage of children in middle childhood in low-income families vary by parents' nativity?<sup>6</sup>

- ◆ 55 percent of children in middle childhood with immigrant parents—3.4 million—live in low-income families
- ◆ 41 percent of children in middle childhood with native-born parents—7.4 million—live in low-income families

## What are the family characteristics of low-income and poor children in middle childhood?

### Parents' Education<sup>7</sup>

Higher levels of parental education decrease the likelihood that a child will live in a low-income or poor family. Among children in middle childhood with at least one parent with some college or additional education, 31 percent live in low-income and 13 percent in poor families. By contrast, among children whose parents have less than a high school degree, 87 percent live in low-income and 57 percent in poor families (Figure 7).

- ◆ 87 percent of children in middle childhood with parents who have less than a high school degree—2.4 million—live in low-income families
- ◆ 69 percent of children in middle childhood with parents who have a high school degree but no college—3.2 million—live in low-income families
- ◆ 31 percent of children in middle childhood with at least one parent who has some college or additional education—5.3 million—live in low-income families

At the same time, significant shares of low-income and poor families with children age 6 through 11 are headed by parents with at least some college education, as shown in Figure 8.

### Parents' Employment<sup>8</sup>

Children in middle childhood with a full-time, year-round employed parent are less likely to live in a low-income family compared to children in this age group with

Figure 7: Percentage of children in middle childhood in low-income and poor families by parents' employment and education, 2014

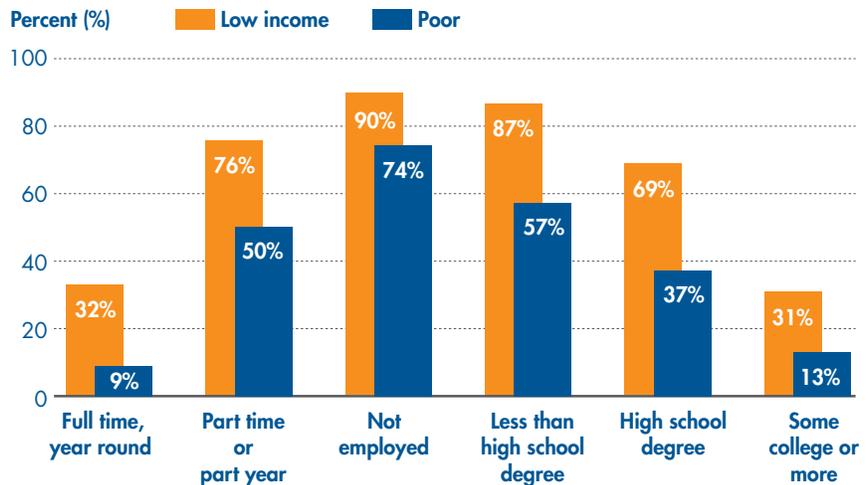
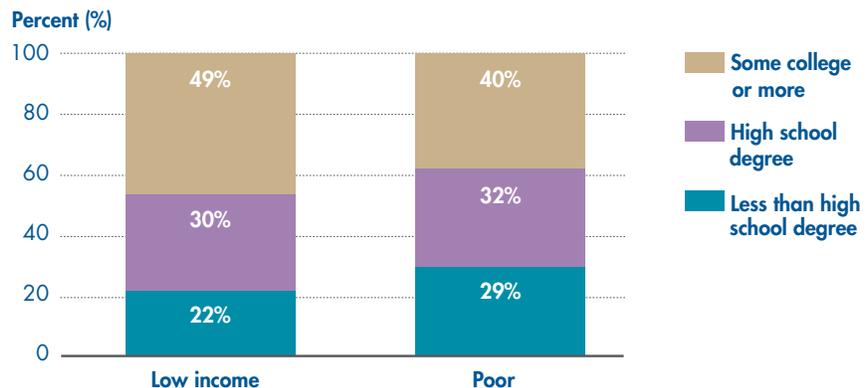


Figure 8: Parents' education among children age 6 through 11 years by family income, 2014



parents who work part time or part year, or who are not employed (Figure 7).

- ◆ 32 percent of children in middle childhood with at least one parent who works full time, year round—5.7 million—live in low-income families
- ◆ 9 percent of children in middle childhood with at least one parent who works full time, year round—1.7 million—live in poor families

- ◆ 76 percent of children in middle childhood with no parent who works full time, but at least one parent who works part time or part year—3.2 million—live in low-income families
- ◆ 50 percent of children in middle childhood with no parent who works full time, but at least one parent who works part time or part year—2.1 million—live in poor families
- ◆ 90 percent of children in middle

childhood with no employed parents—2.0 million—live in low-income families

- ◆ 74 percent of children in middle childhood with no employed parents—1.6 million—live in poor families

Nevertheless, many low-income and poor children age 6 through 11 years have parents who work full time. More than half (52 percent) of low-income children and 31 percent of poor children in this age group live with at least one parent employed full-time, year-round.

### Family Structure

Forty-eight percent of children in middle childhood in low-income families—5.2 million—and 37 percent of children in this age group in poor families—2.0 million—live with married parents. Children who live with married parents are much less likely to be poor or low-income compared to children who live with a single parent.

- ◆ 32 percent of children in middle childhood residing with married parents—5.2 million—live in low-income families

- ◆ 12 percent of children in middle childhood residing with married parents—2.0 million—live in poor families
- ◆ 70 percent of children in middle childhood residing with a single parent—5.7 million—live in low-income families
- ◆ 42 percent of children in middle childhood residing with a single parent—3.4 million—live in poor families

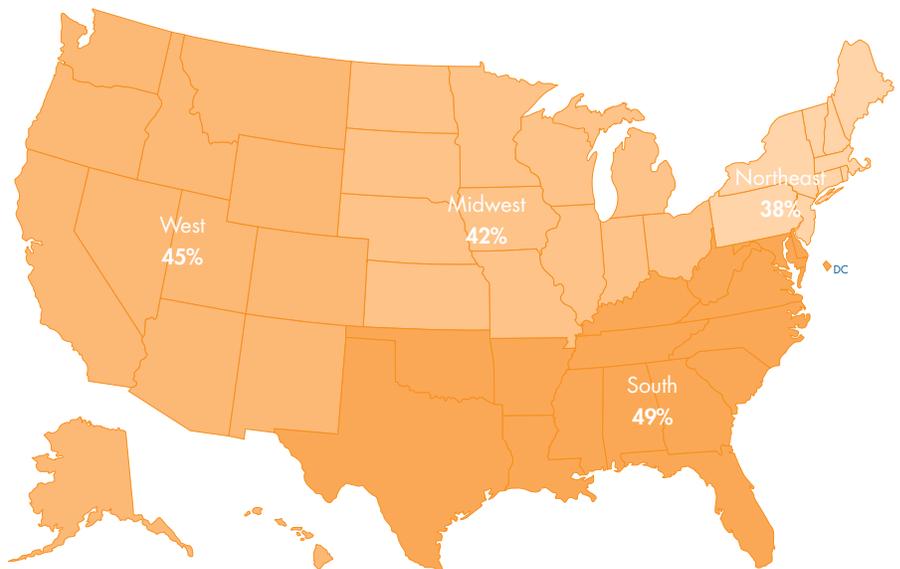
## Does the percentage of children in middle childhood in low-income families vary by where they live?

### Region

The percentage of children in middle childhood in low-income families varies substantially by region.

- ◆ 49 percent of children in middle childhood in the South—4.5 million—live in low-income families
- ◆ 45 percent of children in middle childhood in the West—2.7 million—live in low-income families
- ◆ 42 percent of children in middle childhood in the Midwest—2.1 million—live in low-income families
- ◆ 38 percent of children in middle childhood in the Northeast—1.5 million—live in low-income families

Figure 9: Percentage of children age 6 through 11 in low-income families by region, 2014



### Residential Instability and Home Ownership

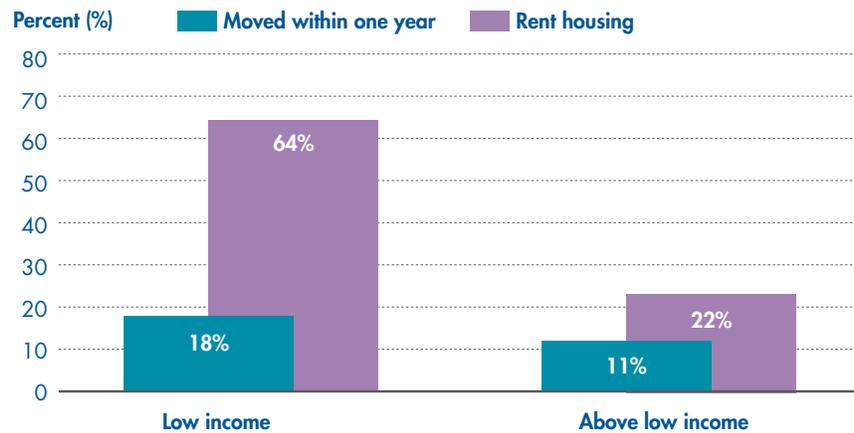
Research suggests that stable housing is important for healthy child development.<sup>9</sup> However, children in middle childhood living in low-income families were over one-and-a-half times as likely as other

children to have moved in the past year and nearly three times as likely to live in families that rent, rather than own, a home (Figure 10).

- ◆ 18 percent of children in middle childhood in low-income families—1.9 million—moved in the last year

- ◆ 11 percent of children in middle childhood in families above the low-income threshold—1.4 million—moved in the last year
- ◆ 64 percent of children in middle childhood in low-income families—7.0 million—live with a family that rents a home
- ◆ 22 percent of children in middle childhood in families above the low-income threshold—3.0 million—live with a family that rents a home

**Figure 10:** Residential instability and home ownership among children age 6 through 11 by family income, 2014

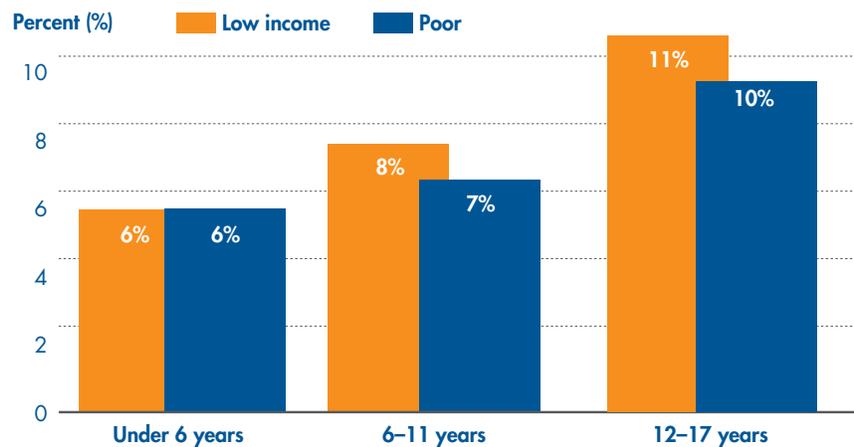


## Are children in middle childhood in low-income families covered by health insurance?

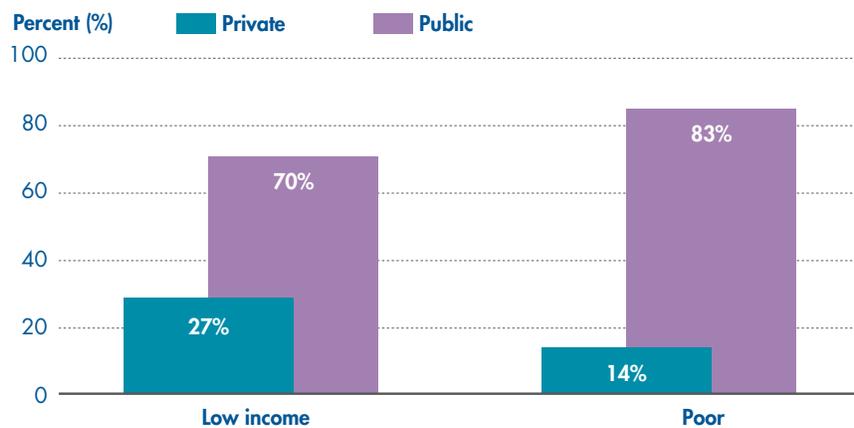
Among all children in middle childhood, 8 percent living in low-income families and 7 percent living in poor families are uninsured.<sup>10</sup> Low-income and poor children in middle childhood are less likely than their older counterparts but more likely than their younger counterparts to be without health insurance coverage (Figure 11).<sup>11</sup> Although 27 percent of low-income children in middle childhood are covered by private health insurance, public insurance reaches 70 percent of low-income children and 83 percent of poor children in this age group (Figure 12).

- ◆ 8 percent of children in middle childhood living in low-income families—0.8 million—are uninsured
- ◆ 27 percent of children in middle childhood living in low-income families—2.9 million—are covered by private insurance
- ◆ 70 percent of children in middle childhood living in low-income families—7.6 million—are covered by public insurance

**Figure 11:** Percentage of children uninsured in low-income and poor families by age, 2014



**Figure 12:** Type of health insurance coverage among children in middle childhood by family income, 2014



## Endnotes

*This fact sheet is part of the National Center for Children in Poverty's demographic fact sheet series and is updated annually. Unless otherwise noted, analysis of the 2014 American Community Survey (ACS) was conducted by Yang Jiang and Mercedes Ekono of NCCP. Estimates include children living in households with at least one parent and most children living apart from both parents (for example, children being raised by grandparents). Children living independently, living with a spouse, or in group quarters are excluded from these data. Children age 14 years and under living with only unrelated adults were not included because data on their income status were not available. Among children who do not live with at least one parent, parental characteristics are those of the householder and/or the householder's spouse. We would like to thank Renée Wilson-Simmons for her advice on this fact sheet and Suma Setty for data checks and proofreading. Special thanks to Diana Gazzia for layout and production.*

1. In this fact sheet, poverty is defined as family income less than 100 percent of the federal poverty threshold, as determined by the U.S. Census Bureau; low income is defined as family income less than 200 percent of the poverty threshold.

2. The U.S. Census Bureau issues the poverty thresholds annually. Thresholds vary by family size and composition. See [www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/data/threshld/](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/data/threshld/) for the complete 2014 poverty thresholds.

3. Cauthen, Nancy K. & Fass, Sarah (2008). *Measuring Income and Poverty in the United States*. New York: National Center for Children in Poverty, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University. Retrieved January 2016 from [http://www.nccp.org/publications/pdf/text\\_825.pdf](http://www.nccp.org/publications/pdf/text_825.pdf).

4. Estimates from the Economic Policy Institute's Family Budget Calculator. Retrieved January 2016 from <http://www.epi.org/resources/budget/>.

5. In the most recent ACS, parents could report children's race as one or more of the following: "White," "Black," "American Indian or Alaska Native," or "Asian and/or Hawaiian/Pacific Islander." In a separate question, parents could report whether their children were of Hispanic origin. For the data reported, children whose parent reported their race as White, Black, American Indian or Alaska Native, or Asian and/or Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and their ethnicity as non-Hispanic are assigned their respective race. Children who were reported to be of more than one race were assigned as Other. Children whose parent identified them as Hispanic were categorized as Hispanic, regardless of their reported race.

6. The variable "native-born parents" is defined to mean that both parents in the family were born in the U.S. or its territories, or born abroad to American parent(s). The variable "immigrant parents" is defined to mean that at least one parent in the family is either a U.S. citizen by naturalization or is not a citizen of the U.S.

7. Parents' education is defined as the education level of the most highly educated parent living in the household. Parents can either have no high school degree, a high school degree but no college, or some college or more.

8. Parents' employment is defined as the employment level of the parent in the household who maintained the highest level of employment in the previous year. Parents can either have no employment in the previous year, part-year or part-time employment, or full-time, year-round employment. Part-year or part-time employment is defined as either working less than 50 weeks in the previous year or less than 35 hours per week. Full-time, year-round employment is defined as working at least 50 weeks in the previous year and 35 hours or more per week.

9. Aratani, Yumiko (2009). *Homeless Children and Youth*. New York: National Center for Children in Poverty, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University. Retrieved January 2016 from [http://www.nccp.org/publications/pdf/text\\_888.pdf](http://www.nccp.org/publications/pdf/text_888.pdf).

10. People can report more than one type of insurance coverage. Children not covered by private or public health insurance at the time of the survey are considered uninsured.

11. Schwarz, Susan Wile (2009). *Adolescent Mental Health in the United States*. New York: National Center for Children in Poverty, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University. Retrieved January 2016 from [http://www.nccp.org/publications/pdf/text\\_878.pdf](http://www.nccp.org/publications/pdf/text_878.pdf).

To find comparable information for all children, see *Basic Facts about Low-Income Children: Children under 18 Years, 2014*; for infants and toddlers, see *Basic Facts about Low-Income Children: Children under 3 Years, 2014*; for children in middle childhood, see *Basic Facts about Low-Income Children: Children under 6 Years, 2014*; for adolescent children, see *Basic Facts about Low-Income Children: Children 12 through 17 Years, 2014*.

### SUGGESTED CITATION

Jiang, Y., Ekono, M., & Skinner, C. (2016). *Basic Facts about Low-Income Children: Children 6 through 11 Years, 2014*. New York: National Center for Children in Poverty, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University.