



National Snapshot: Poverty among Women & Families, 2019

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The U.S. Census Bureau data released in September 2019 shows poverty has barely budged for families in the U.S since the year before. Despite there being somewhat higher economic gains, women's poverty rates have stayed virtually the same and continued to be above the poverty rate for men in 2018. Nearly one in eight women – over 15.5 million – and nearly one in six children – nearly 11.9 million – lived in poverty in 2018. Nearly three in five (58 percent) of all poor children lived in families headed by unmarried mothers.¹

Women were 36 percent more likely to live in poverty than men

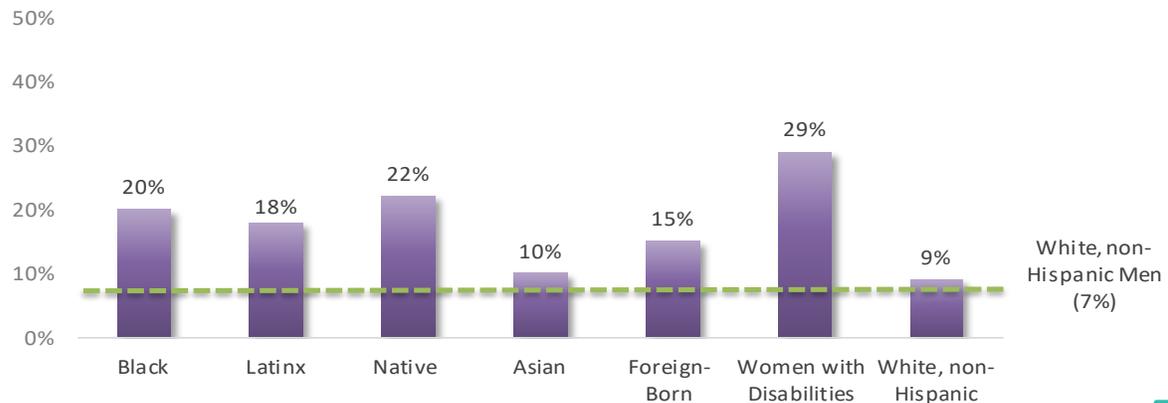
- Nearly one in eight women, more than 15.5 million, lived in poverty in 2018.
- More than two in five (46 percent) of these women lived in extreme poverty, defined as income at or below 50 percent of the federal poverty level. This means 1 in 18 women lived in extreme poverty last year.
- Women (12 percent) were more likely than men (9 percent) to live in poverty in 2018. Women were also more likely than men to be in extreme poverty: six percent of women versus four percent of men lived in extreme poverty in 2018.

Poverty remains even higher for certain groups of women

- Women in all racial and ethnic groups were more likely than white, non-Hispanic men to be in poverty. About one in eleven (nine percent) white, non-Hispanic women lived in poverty in 2018, compared to seven percent of white, non-Hispanic men. However, poverty rates were particularly high for many groups of women:²
 - **Black women:** 20 percent of Black women lived in poverty.
 - **Latinx women:** 18 percent of Latinx women lived in poverty.
 - **Native women:** 22 percent of Native women lived in poverty.
 - **Asian women:** 10 percent of Asian women lived in poverty.

- More than one in seven (15 percent) foreign born women lived in poverty in 2018.
- The poverty rate for women age 18 to 64 was higher for women with disabilities than it was for women without disabilities, 29 percent and 11 percent, respectively. The poverty rate among their male counterparts was lower: 23 percent of men with disabilities lived in poverty and 8 percent of men without disabilities lived in poverty.

POVERTY RATES FOR ADULT WOMEN, 2018



Source: Census Bureau, Current Population Survey. Figures for women with disabilities are for women 18-64.



WHAT DOES THE FEDERAL POVERTY RATE MEASURE?

The official poverty rate reported by the Census Bureau measures the percentage of the U.S. population with total income below the federal poverty threshold for their family size (e.g., \$25,465 in 2018 for a family of four with two children). "Income" is calculated before taxes and includes only cash income, such as:

- Earnings
- Pension and retirement income
- Investment income (i.e. interest, dividends, royalties, estates, and trusts)
- Social Security
- Public Assistance (non-cash benefits are not included in the measure – see below)
- Unemployment benefits, workers' compensation, veterans' payments
- Alimony and child support payments

A number of other federal and state benefits that help support low-income families are not counted as income under the official poverty measure. These include:

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits (formerly known as Food Stamps)
- Tax benefits (e.g., Earned Income Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit)
- Housing subsidies

Nearly one in six children lived in poverty in 2018

- Nearly 11.9 million children lived in poverty in 2018, more than two out of five of whom (42 percent) lived in extreme poverty. This means that nearly one in six (16 percent) children was poor last year.
- Poverty rates were even higher for certain groups of children:
 - **Black children:** Nearly one in three (30 percent) Black children lived in poverty.

- **Latinx children:** Nearly one in four (24 percent) Latinx children lived in poverty.
- **Native children:** More than one in four (28 percent) Native children lived in poverty.
- **Asian children:** One in nine (11 percent) Asian children lived in poverty.
- **Foreign-born children:** More than one in five (22 percent) foreign-born children lived in poverty.
- **White, non-Hispanic children:** Nearly one in eleven (9 percent) white, non-Hispanic children lived in poverty.

More than one in three families headed by unmarried mothers lived in poverty in 2018

- Nearly three in five poor children (58 percent) lived in families headed by unmarried mothers.³
- 615,000 families headed by unmarried mothers (13 percent) were poor in 2018, even though the mother worked full time throughout the year.
- Families with children headed by unmarried mothers were much more likely to be in poverty than families headed by unmarried fathers or married couple families. The poverty rate for families with children headed by unmarried mothers was 34 percent, compared to 17 percent for families with children headed by unmarried fathers and 6 percent of families with children in married couple families.
- Families with children headed by women of color fared even worse:
 - **Black families headed by unmarried mothers:** Nearly two in five (38 percent) Black families headed by unmarried mothers lived in poverty.
 - **Latinx families headed by unmarried mothers:** Nearly two in five (38 percent) Latinx families headed by unmarried mothers lived in poverty.
 - **Native families headed by unmarried mothers:** More than two in five (43 percent) Native families headed by unmarried mothers lived in poverty.⁴
 - **Asian families headed by unmarried mothers:** More than one in four (29 percent) Asian families headed by unmarried mothers lived in poverty.
 - **White, non-Hispanic families headed by unmarried mothers:** More than one in four (28 percent) white, non-Hispanic families headed by unmarried mothers lived in poverty.

POVERTY RATES FOR FAMILIES HEADED BY UNMARRIED MOTHERS, 2018



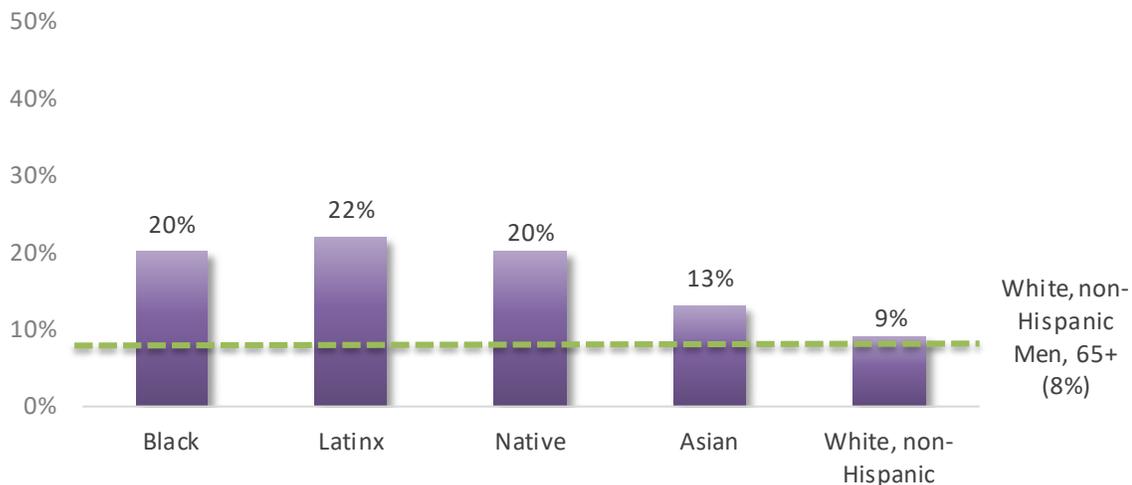
Source: Census Bureau, Current Population Survey

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Older women were more likely to be poor than older men

- Women made up more than three in five (62 percent) poor people 65 and older in 2018.
- The poverty rate for women 65 and older was 11 percent, three percentage points higher than the poverty rate for older men (8 percent).
- Poverty rates were particularly high for certain groups of older women in 2018:
 - **Black women:** About one in five (20 percent) Black women 65+ lived in poverty.
 - **Latinx women:** More than one in five (22 percent) Latinx women 65+ lived in poverty.
 - **Native women:** One in five (20 percent) Native women 65+ lived in poverty.
 - **Asian women:** More than one in eight (13 percent) Asian women 65+ lived in poverty.
 - **Foreign-Born women:** More than one in six (18 percent) foreign-born women 65+ lived in poverty.
 - **Women living alone:** More than one in six (18 percent) women 65+ living alone lived in poverty, compared to 15 percent of men 65 and older living alone.
 - **White, non-Hispanic women:** One in eleven (9 percent) white, non-Hispanic women 65+ lived in poverty.

POVERTY RATES FOR WOMEN 65 AND OLDER, 2018



Source: Census Bureau, Current Population Survey

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1 All data are NWLC calculations of U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2019 Annual Social and Economic Supplement, available at <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps.html>.

2 Asian women are those who self-identified themselves in the U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey as Asian. Black women are those who self-identified themselves as Black or African American. Native women are those who identified themselves as American Indian or Alaskan Native. White, non-Hispanic women and men are those who identified themselves as white, but who are not of Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish origin. Latinx women are of any race who identified themselves to be of Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish origin. Foreign-born women are those who have identified themselves as born outside of U.S territories and possessions. Persons with disabilities are those who have identified themselves as having any physical or cognitive difficulty, as measured by affirmative responses to any of the CPS' six cognitive difficulties.

3 Almost 11.9 million children lived in poverty in 2018, which includes 332,000 not living in families.

4 NWLC calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2018 American Community Survey, available at <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs>.