

Child Poverty Rate

DEFINITION

This indicator measures the percentage of youth ages 0 to 18 whose family's income in the past twelve months was below the 2008 poverty threshold, which was \$21,834 for a household with two adults and two children.

CONTEXT

Living in poverty puts children at risk. Living in poverty often means families have poorer mental and physical health, difficulty obtaining sufficient healthy food, suitable housing and a quality education. The consequences of growing up in poverty can last a lifetime, particularly if poverty leads to physical, cognitive and/or emotional problems.

The current federal poverty level underestimates the income at which a household can be self-supporting. The methodology for deriving the federal poverty threshold developed in the 1960s is based on estimated food costs assuming that families spend one-third of their income on food. Because spending on food has fallen as a proportion of family budgets since the 1960s from one third to about one sixth, the original multiplier of three is now too small, resulting in an underestimate of the income at which a family can be self-sufficient (Kenyon 2006, 38; Gruber 2011, 494).

In 2005, the federal poverty level for a family of four was an annual income of \$19,350, but in the same year the estimated basic needs budget for a family of four in New Hampshire with two young children and one parent working, was \$36,857. This basic needs budget omits many items which many people take for granted such as eating inexpensive restaurant meals or watching cable TV. Despite wide recognition of the limits of federal poverty statistics and although the U.S. Census Bureau is moving to also consider an alternative measure of poverty, the federal government has not changed the formula for officially determining poverty guidelines (Kenyon 2006).

Child Poverty Rate

By County, 2006-2008

	Poverty Rate, 0-18 years	Poverty Rate, 18 years and older
STATE TOTAL	11.0%	
Belknap County	10.0%	9.0%
Carroll County	15.3%	8.6%
Cheshire County	9.4%	10.1%
Coos County	15.2%	10.2%
Grafton County	8.4%	9.5%
Hillsborough County	10.2%	5.7%
Merrimack County	11.6%	7.2%
Rockingham County	4.3%	4.4%
Strafford County	12.7%	11.5%
Sullivan County	11.7%	8.9%

NOTE: State total does not include 18 year olds

NEW HAMPSHIRE FINDINGS

In 2008 more than one in ten New Hampshire children lived in poverty and that percentage has likely risen since the beginning of the Great Recession in December 2007. The percentage of children eighteen years and younger in poverty varied from a low of 4.3 percent in Rockingham County to a high of 15.3 percent in Carroll County and 15.2 percent in Coos County. For most counties, the adult poverty rate is lower than the child poverty rate. For example, the adult poverty rate in Carroll County is 8.6 percent compared to 15.3 percent for children and the adult poverty rate in Coos County is 10.2 percent compared to 15.2 percent for children. (see table on previous page)

Children living in New Hampshire cities are far more likely to live in poverty than New Hampshire children living in rural or suburban areas. More than one in five New Hampshire children living in cities has a family income below the poverty level compared to 11 percent of children living in rural areas and 7 percent of children living in New Hampshire's suburban areas (Mattingly and Stransky 2010).

In 2005, of the New Hampshire children living in poverty, 68.5 percent lived in single mother families, 7.2 percent lived in single father families, and 24.5 percent lived in married couple families (Kids Count Data Center).

The last study of basic needs budget and livable wages in New Hampshire found basic needs family budgets ranged from two to three-and-a-half times the federal poverty line. If one broadens the focus on child poverty to include children whose families live below 250 percent of the 2009 poverty level (\$55,125 for a family of four) 35 percent of New Hampshire families with children had insufficient incomes to meet basic needs (Kenyon 2006, 38, Kids Count Data Center).

SOURCE OF DATA FOR ILLUSTRATION/METHODOLOGY

Kids Count Data Center: www.datacenterkidscount.org. Original data from U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 3-year estimates.

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