

About the NSCH

The Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) funds and directs the **National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH)**, which the U.S. Census Bureau conducts.

The NSCH is the **largest national- and state-level survey on the health and health care needs of children ages 0-17, their families, and their communities.**

It is an annual household survey completed by a parent or guardian, either by web or paper and pencil.

New Content Areas

- Autoimmune diseases
- Eating and weight-related behaviors and concerns
- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder (FASD) evaluations and diagnoses
- Housing instability
- Receipt of federal benefits
- School readiness, known as Healthy and Ready to Learn (HRTL)
- Structural inequities
- Use of e-cigarettes and vaping in the home

State Oversamples

Oversampling increases the number of households sampled and completed surveys to enable detailed analysis of specific populations, such as regions within a state or racial and ethnic groups. In 2022, nine states and one metropolitan area sponsored oversamples: California, Colorado, Nebraska, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Wyoming, and Atlanta, Georgia.

2022 Data Release

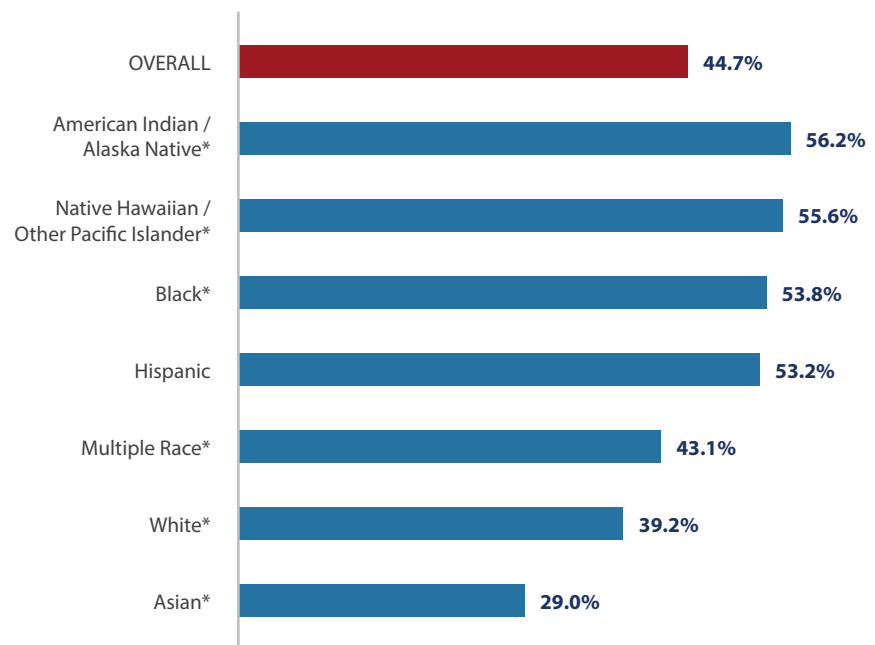
Access the most recent [data and supporting materials](#).

Poverty and **material hardship** – the inability to afford basic needs like food, housing, and medical care – place children at risk of physical health problems, mental health and behavioral problems, and worse learning outcomes. This brief presents new data showing the percentage of children in the United States (US) who experience poverty and material hardships.

Family Income and Lifetime Material Hardship among Children

- In 2022, nearly 1 in 5 (18.5%) U.S. children ages 0-17 lived in families with income¹ below the poverty level, and another 1 in 5 (19.7%) children lived in families with income 100-199% of the poverty level (data not shown). In 2021, the poverty level for a family of four with two children was \$27,479. (See Data Notes for more information on poverty thresholds.)
- Material hardship is defined as parent-reported difficulty covering the basics, like food or housing, on the family's income. More than 4 in 10 (44.7%) children, representing about 31.9 million children, have experienced material hardship during their lifetime.
- The prevalence of lifetime material hardship is highest, exceeding 50%, among non-Hispanic American Indian/Alaska Native children (56.2%), non-Hispanic Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander children (55.6%), non-Hispanic Black children (53.8%), and Hispanic children (53.2%). It is the lowest among non-Hispanic Asian children (29.0%), followed by non-Hispanic White children (39.2%).

Proportion of children who have experienced material hardship in their lifetime, by race and ethnicity, 2022



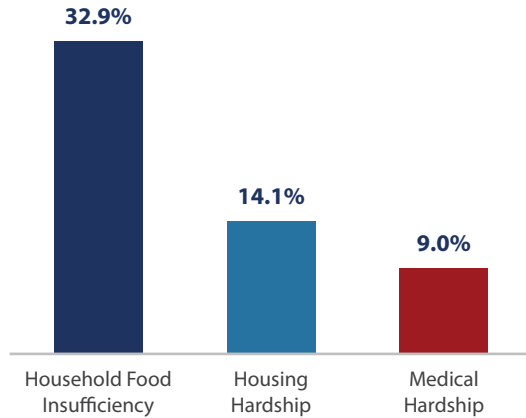
*Category is non-Hispanic

¹All references to household income and poverty levels refer to past year (2021) income. This is because respondents to the 2022 NSCH reported about income in the prior calendar year.

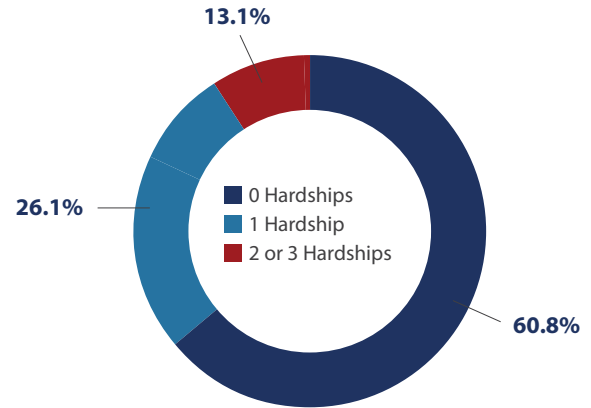
Recent Food, Housing, and Medical-Related Hardships

- **Food insufficiency:** More than 1 in 3 children (32.9%) experienced household food insufficiency, defined as the household's inability to afford enough nutritious meals during the past 12 months.
- **Housing hardship:** Nearly 1 in 7 children (14.1%) lived in households that experienced housing hardship, defined as being unable to pay the mortgage or rent on time during the past 12 months.
- **Medical hardship:** Nearly 1 in 11 children (9.0%) lived in households that experienced medical hardship, defined as problems paying for the child's medical or health care bills during the past 12 months.
- **Multiple hardships:** More than 1 in 8 children (13.1%) experienced multiple types of material hardships during the past 12 months.

Proportion of children who experienced household food insufficiency, housing hardship, and medical hardship in the past 12 months, 2022



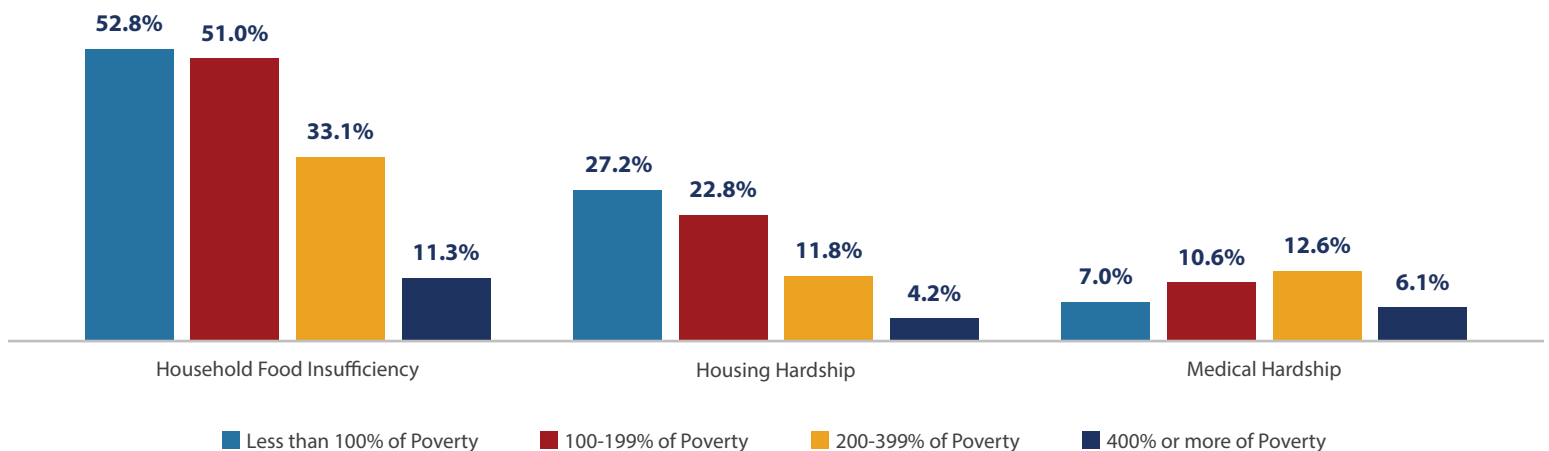
Proportion of children experiencing 0, 1, or 2-3 material hardships in the past 12 months, 2022



Hardships by Family Income

- **Food insufficiency:** The prevalence of household food insufficiency exceeded 50% among children in families whose income was below 200% of the poverty level. This decreased to 33.1% among children in families with income 200-399% of the poverty level, and to 11.3% among children in families with income at 400% or more of the poverty level. (See Data Notes for more information on poverty thresholds.)
- **Housing hardship:** The prevalence of housing hardship decreased with increasing income, from 27.2% among children in families living below the poverty level to 4.2% among children in families whose income was 400% or more of the poverty level.
- **Medical hardship:** The prevalence of medical hardship was highest among children in families whose income was 200-399% above the poverty level (12.6%) and lowest among children with family income below the poverty level (7.0%) or 400% or more above the poverty level (6.1%).

Proportion of children who experienced household food insufficiency, housing hardship, and medical hardship in the past 12 months, by past year family income,* 2022



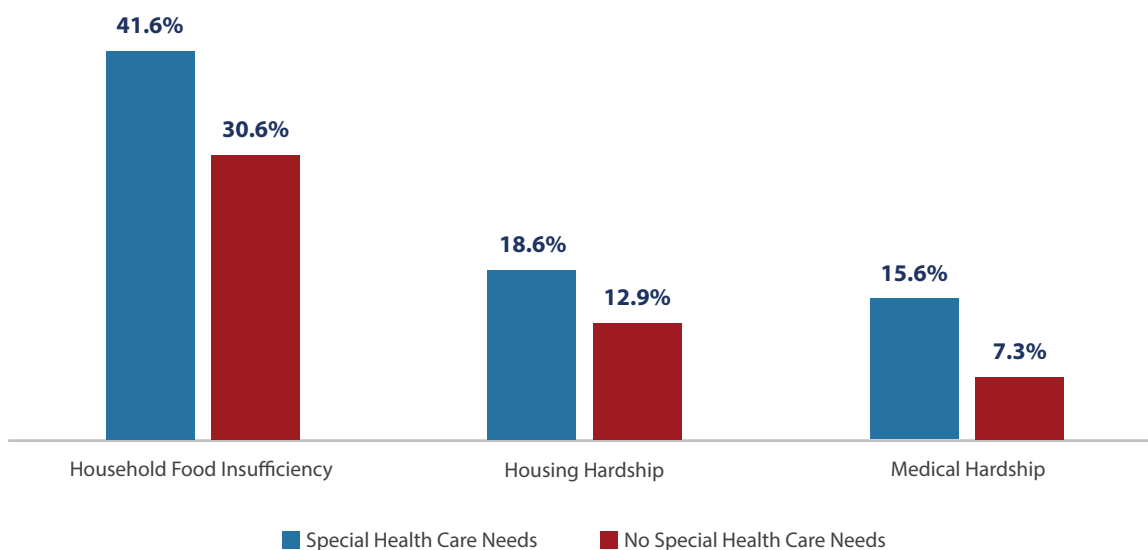
*Ratio of Income to Poverty Thresholds; In 2021, the poverty level for a family of four with two children was \$27,479. See Data Notes for more information about poverty thresholds.

Hardships by Special Health Care Needs

The Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) has a core responsibility to monitor and improve services for **children and youth with special health care needs** – defined as those who have or are at increased risk for a chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional condition and who also require health and related services of a type or amount beyond that required by children generally.

- **Food insufficiency:** The prevalence of household food insufficiency was more than 10 percentage points higher among children with special health care needs than those without (41.6% vs. 30.6%).
- **Housing hardship:** Housing hardship was more common among children with special health care needs than those without (18.6% vs. 12.9%).
- **Medical hardship:** The prevalence of medical hardship was more than twice as high among children with special health care needs than children without special health care needs (15.6% vs. 7.3%).

Proportion of children who experienced household food insufficiency, housing hardship, and medical hardship in the past 12 months, by special health care needs status, 2022



Data Notes

In 2022, parents completed questionnaires for 54,103 children. Estimates presented in this brief are weighted to represent the population of children living in U.S. households. Data users are advised that imputation and weighting by race and ethnicity were revised for the 2022 NSCH as part of multi-faceted efforts to improve consistency across federal surveys. More information on these changes can be found in the [2022 NSCH FAQs and Methodology Report](#). Similar enhancements will be made retroactively to the 2016-2021 NSCH data files. Public release of those files is anticipated beginning in October 2023. Data users should use those re-released files for combination with the 2022 NSCH data to conduct multi-year and trend analyses.

The Census Bureau publishes **poverty thresholds** for statistical purposes **every year**. Poverty thresholds are calculated using family income before taxes and vary by family size and the age of family members. They were originally derived from the cost of a minimum food diet multiplied by three to account for other family expenses and are updated annually for inflation using the Consumer Price Index. In 2021, the poverty threshold for a family of four with two children was \$27,479.