Long-Term Poverty

One out of every five black children ages 0-5 lived in poverty for at least nine years between 1987-1996. (See Figure 2)

Importance

While living in poverty even occasionally is harmful to children, living in poverty year after year is considerably worse because the effects of poverty on children are cumulative.¹ For example, young children growing up in poverty are more likely to have lower cognitive abilities and school achievement² and impaired health and development.³ Growing up in poverty is also associated with lower occupational status and a lower wage rate as an adult.⁴ The problems associated with being raised in severe poverty (less than 50 percent of the poverty threshold) are correspondingly worse.⁵

Trends

The percentage of young children who spent six or more of their next 10 years in poverty has increased over the last several decades, from 7 percent among those ages 0-5 in 1967 to 11 percent for those of similar age in 1987. (See Figure 1) Most of this increase has taken place among non-Black children. (See Table 1)
Differences by Race and Ethnicity

Black children are far more likely than other children to experience long-term poverty. A third of black children ages 0-5 in 1987 experienced at least six of the next 10 years in poverty, compared with less than five percent of other children. Moreover, 21 percent of black children spent at least nine of the next 10 years in poverty, compared with less than 1 percent of other children. (See Figure 2) Only 31 percent of black children ages 0-5 in 1987 experienced no poverty at all over the next 10 years, compared with 75 percent of other children. (See Table 1)
Related Indicators

None

State and Local Estimates

None

International Estimates

None

National Goals

None

What Works: Programs and Interventions that May Influence this Indicator

None

Research References


Definition

Families are considered to be in poverty if their pre-tax money income (not including in-kind benefits such as food stamps and not including the earned income tax credit) is less than a money income threshold that varies by family size and composition. The thresholds are updated annually to reflect inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index. In 2000, the poverty threshold for a family of four with two related children under age 18 was $17,463.

U.S. poverty thresholds for 1980 and beyond for various family configurations are available at http://www.census.gov

In our analyses, we differentiate among children who, over the course of ten years of growing up, spend no years in poverty, 1-2 years in poverty, 3-5 years, 5-8 years, and 9-10 years in poverty.

Data Source


Raw Data Source

The Panel Study of Income Dynamics http://www.isr.umich.edu/src/psid/

Approximate Date of Next Update

Unknown