# DATA SNAPSHOT

September 17, 2020

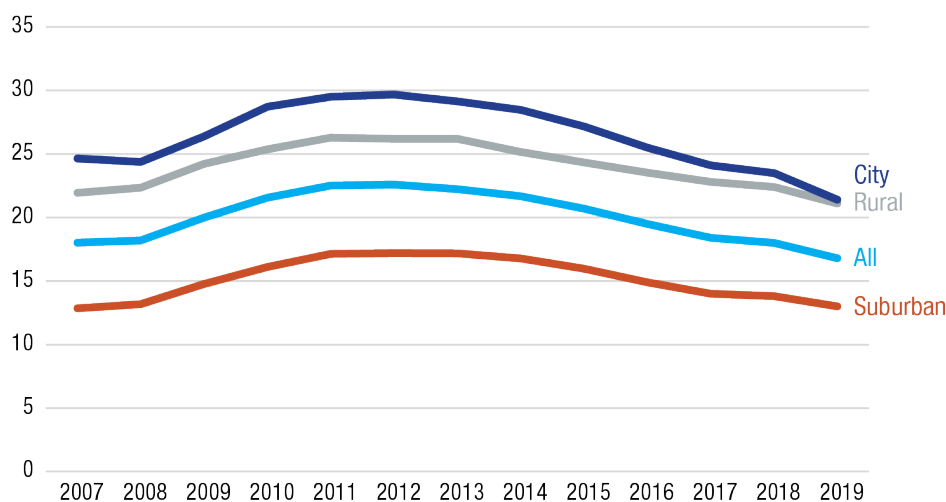# New Data Show One-in-Six Children Were Poor Before COVID-19 Pandemic

## Jessica A. Carson and Sarah Boege

New American Community Survey (ACS) data released by the U.S. Census Bureau on September 17, 2020 show child poverty at 16.8 percent in 2019, down from 18 percent in 2018. Sub-national patterns in child poverty remain intact: for example, higher in rural and urban places than in the suburbs (see Figure). Child poverty declined in 17 states over the year, although rates and the size of changes varied across states (see Table). As is typical, the ACS child poverty rate is higher than the official rate via the Current Population Survey (CPS) at 14.4 percent in 2019, which was released on September 15, and the documented one-year decline was smaller. Difference in rates, usually driven by distinct measures of income and varied survey methods, are potentially compounded by differing data collection periods for 2019. Official poverty measures rely on data gathered in February through April 2020, a period when collection efforts were hampered by the pandemic. The ACS concluded data collection in December 2019 and therefore was not similarly impacted. Importantly, 2019 child poverty declines are likely now outdated due to the COVID-19-related recession, the effects of which may last years. For instance, child poverty had still not yet returned to pre-Great Recession rates from 2007 in all states by 2019 (see Table), illustrating that recovery in child poverty can be a long process.

**Child poverty was 16.8 percent in 2019, leaving more than one in six children poor even before the effects of the pandemic-related recession are measured.**

### About the Authors

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▶ 2016 Child Poverty Rate Sees Largest Decline Since Before Great Recession (September 2017)

## FIGURE: PERCENT OF CHILDREN IN POVERTY BY PLACE TYPE, 2007–2019



**Analysis:** J.A. Carson & S. Boege, Carsey School, University of New Hampshire
**Source:** American Community Survey 1-year estimates, U.S. Census Bureau, 2007–2019