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Media Relations

September 17, 2015

UNH Finds Child Poverty Continues to Decline across America; Black Children Remain Most Disadvantaged

DURHAM, N.H. – Child poverty rates fell slightly across the country in 2014 but still remain higher than at the end of the Great Recession in 2009, according to new research from the Carsey School of Public Policy at the University of New Hampshire. Black children are by far the most disadvantaged with an overall poverty rate of 38.4 percent, nearly three times the non-Hispanic white child poverty rate (13.0 percent) and 6.3 percentage points higher than the Hispanic child poverty rate.

According to the 2014 American Community Survey released Thursday (Sept. 17, 2015) by the U.S. Census, 21.7 percent of children were poor in 2014, down from 22.3 percent in 2013. Child poverty declined in rural places, suburbs, and cities, with the largest declines in rural America. The rate of rural black children living in poverty is especially high, at 51.1 percent.

“It is encouraging to see declines in child poverty continue for a second year in a row,” the researchers said. “However, it is troubling that five years into economic recovery child poverty remains 1.7 percentage points higher than in 2009, at the end of the recession and more than one in five children still lived below the poverty line in 2014. It is imperative to keep state and federal policies that may improve child poverty on the radar, as extensive research documents the long term consequences of growing up poor.”

The researchers also noted that while black children are most likely to be living in poverty they are also living further below the poverty threshold (\$24,008 for a family of two adults and two children) than other poor children. “This suggests that relatively large-scale poverty alleviation efforts will be necessary to reduce the sharp racial-ethnic disparities evident in the data,” the researchers said. “As the nation struggles with issues of racism and racial equity, getting to the early roots of disparity may be particularly important.”

The research was conducted by Beth Mattingly, director of research on vulnerable families at the Carsey School and research assistant professor of sociology at UNH; Andrew Schaefer, a doctoral student in sociology and a vulnerable families research associate at the Carsey School; and Jessica Carson, vulnerable families research scientist at the Carsey School.

The Carsey School of Public Policy conducts research, leadership development, and engaged scholarship relevant to public policy. They address pressing challenges, striving for innovative, responsive, and equitable solutions at all levels of government and in the for-profit and nonprofit sectors.

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