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Citizens' Committee for Children of New York Releases Preliminary Analysis of New Census Data

Today the United States Census Bureau released the most recent data available from the American Community Survey (ACS). This release is especially remarkable because the 2019 data serve as the last comprehensive snapshot of American life before the COVID-19 pandemic and economic recession in 2020. Today's data make clear that hundreds of thousands of children and their families in New York City faced extreme economic hardship before the pandemic and this hardship is exacerbated now. Further, these data reflect the last year of results from sampling methods based on the 2010 decennial census count. Future ACS data releases will be based on the 2020 decennial census, which was not only delayed by the pandemic but also disrupted by underfunding and the federal administration's ongoing efforts to undercount the population, including a failed attempt to add a question on citizenship status. These disruptions risk an undercount of the population, which harms children and families by reducing federal revenue allocations to states and localities and federal spending on vital nutrition, housing, education, and health programs guided by census data.

Persistent Poverty Put Children and Families at Risk Before and During the Pandemic

Even though the 2019 estimates show marginal improvements in the share of all New Yorkers facing poverty (16%, down from 17.3% in 2018), children and their families across the city continued to face economic insecurity at alarmingly high rates. More than an estimated 939,000 adults and 372,000 children experienced poverty. Black and Hispanic/Latino New Yorkers are twice as likely to experience poverty as their White peers.

Poverty Estimatesⁱ	<i>Staten</i>					
Individuals (Share) in each geography	<i>Bronx</i>	<i>Brooklyn</i>	<i>Manhattan</i>	<i>Queens</i>	<i>Island</i>	<i>NYC</i>
Total in Poverty	364,026 (26.4%)	446,938 (17.7%)	221,821 (14.0%)	240,301 (10.8%)	38,942 (8.3%)	1,312,028 (16.0%)
Children Under 18 in Poverty	125,073 (37.1%)	139,533 (24.5%)	36,266 (15.8%)	58,612 (13.4%)	12,874 (12.5%)	372,358 (22.2%)

Poverty Estimates by Raceⁱⁱ	<i>Asian Alone</i>	<i>Black or African American Alone</i>	<i>Hispanic or Latino of any race</i>	<i>White, Not Hispanic or Latino</i>
Total in Poverty	168,536 (14.2%)	413,131 (20.5%)	497,960 (20.9%)	263,415 (10.1%)

This pervasive economic insecurity and inequality contributed to the disproportionate impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on residents in communities of color. These households continued to be more likely to live in overcrowded rental housing, have adults who lack health insurance, and work in essential services or face-to-face industries—all issues that heightened the pandemic's impact. These conditions in 2019 were precursors to the devastation of the pandemic and demonstrate why the well-being of children and their families must be the focus of local, state, and federal relief and recovery efforts.



Lack of Health Care Coverage When It is More Important Than Ever

While most New Yorkers and nearly all children were covered by health insurance in 2019, a trend that has increased steadily since 2008, more than 36,000 children in New York City remain uninsured in 2019. These data also revealed that foreign born individuals had an uninsured rate three times that of native-born peers, 12% versus 4%.

As well, adult individuals who were unemployed had a higher uninsured rate than employed New Yorkers, at 15% and 10% respectively. This number will likely increase once data for 2020, available next year, fully account for the number of New Yorkers young and old who experienced gaps in health insurance coverage due to job loss, inability to afford premiums, or other barriers.

Insurance Status ⁱⁱⁱ

Individuals (Share)	Children Under 19	Adults (19-64)	Adults (65+)
Total Insured	1,761,451 (98.0%)	4,712,507 (90.1%)	1,224,957 (98.6%)
Medicaid Coverage	930,757 (51.8%)	1,361,669 (26.0%)	396,790 (31.9%)
Employer Insurance	751,722 (41.8%)	2,959,038 (56.6%)	398,587 (32.1%)
Direct Purchase Insurance	188,199 (10.5%)	578,832 (11.1%)	191,961 (15.4%)

Note: Insurance status shown only for the four largest categories insuring children in combination or alone. Individuals may have more than form of insurance coverage.

Ensuring Stable Employment and Housing Remain Top Priority for Policymakers to Address

The pandemic has changed the way that we live, work and socialize for years to come. But a look at pre-pandemic employment in NYC reveals preexisting inequities. About 959,625 workers NYC (23.3% of the workforce) worked in professional, technical services, management or administrative support, or finance and real estate—industries that generally have higher incomes and are able to work remotely. However, more than 444,599 workers (10.8% of the workforce) were employed in the arts, entertainment, and recreation and food service industries that were already vulnerable to low-wage and unstable employment. We now know these sectors were most impacted by the pandemic. Another 1,142,232 New Yorkers (27.7% of the workforce) worked in educational, health care, and social assistance services – many were and continue to be on the front lines of the pandemic.^{iv}

As a renter-majority city, the 10.5% of New Yorkers who lived in overcrowded rental housing in 2019 already faced challenges before social distancing measures made living in close quarters and the inability to self-isolate even more challenging, especially for the over one million children and their families engaging in remote learning.^v Loss of wages or unemployment for families in 2020 has exacerbated a pre-existing urgent need in 2019 for more affordable housing in New York City.

Poverty is a Policy Choice

Poverty and other challenges families faced in 2019 were already deeply problematic, then the pandemic hit. As responses to and recovery from the pandemic evolve, it is incumbent upon all levels of government to address the immediate and emerging needs of hundreds of thousands of children and their families in New York City. The hardships families faced prior to the pandemic set the stage for new challenges adapting to a remote and technology-based future without reliable access to devices and broadband internet that are even more important today to access education, health care, and employment opportunities. We stand ready to partner with government leaders to ensure the health, housing, education, and safety of our city’s children



and their families are front and center in both short-term recovery efforts and longer-term strategies that will mitigate future crises.

To ensure New York State and New York City can avoid harmful reductions to essential services and better address the immediate and emerging needs of New Yorkers, we urge federal, state, and local elected leaders to take the following critical steps:

- Federal policy makers must pass federal stimulus with direct aid to states and localities and enact the Heroes Act;
- State policy makers must pursue revenue raisers and tax policy reforms;
- State policy makers must grant New York City borrowing authority to permit the issuance of municipal bonds.

Federal, state, and local resources generated from these actions are critical to prevent deep budget and service reductions and to ensure that the immediate needs of children and their families are met such that families remain housed and caregivers are connected to employment; young and school-age children are safely engaged in learning opportunities; and the health and behavioral health care needs of children and their families are met. A failure to invest in children and families now would only serve to deepen and prolong the economic recession and produce troubling and costly outcomes for years to come.

Moving forward and for the long-haul, all levels of government must prioritize policies that promote economic equity, mobility and well-being. We look forward to a near future where a livable wage, deeper earned income tax credits, and expanded paid sick leave and family leave are common place; where savings platforms and asset building opportunities are widely accessible; where affordable housing, as well as universal approaches to health care, child care, preschool, and higher education are available. In addition, to truly make sustainable change, a long-view approach is necessary and bold policies to eliminate poverty, including child allowances and universal basic income models—among others—must be pursued. Our focus must be to advance and achieve budgets, legislation, and policies that result in all children and their families enjoying a standard of living that supports good health, economic security, and well-being.

In the coming weeks, Citizens' Committee for Children of New York will update our comprehensive database, data.cccnewyork.org, with these most recent statistics from the US Census Bureau's 2019 ACS. We will also release a more detailed summary of new data in our annual snapshot of New York City's children and families, as well as our analysis of weekly data from the US Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey, which details the current impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and families in the New York metropolitan area.

About Citizens' Committee for Children of New York

Citizens' Committee for Children of New York educates and mobilizes New Yorkers to make the city a better place for children. Since 1944, our advocacy has combined public policy research and data analysis with citizen action. We cast light on the issues, educate the public, engage allies, and identify and promote practical solutions to ensure that every New York City child is healthy, housed, educated and safe. For more information on CCC, visit our website at www.cccnewyork.org. Stay up to date on the latest news and information regarding the well-being of New York City's children by following us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, @CCCNewYork.

Data Sources

ⁱ Tables: S1701

ⁱⁱ Tables: S1701

ⁱⁱⁱ Tables: S2701; S2703; S2704

^{iv} Tables: S2403; S2405

^v Tables: B25014