

Forty-three percent of US children live in low-income families

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Forty-three percent of all children in the United States live in low-income families, according to a report released late last month by the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP).

The percentage of children living in low-income families increased by one percentage point between 2009—the official start of the economic “recovery” proclaimed by the Obama administration—and 2015. The NCCP defines “low-income families” as those earning below twice the federal poverty threshold (FPT), which is currently set at \$24,036 for a family of four.

The total number of children living in these families is 30.6 million, including 5.2 million infants and toddlers under the age of three.

The very youngest of children are the most vulnerable to poverty and low-income. Forty-five percent of children under the age of three live in low-income families, and 23 percent (2.6 million) live in families with incomes below the federal poverty level.

According to the NCCP, families generally need to make twice the FPT to support themselves. What constitutes a livable income varies widely, however, as the cost of food, rent/mortgage, and other necessities is significantly higher in many cities.

Supporting a family of four in Boston, Massachusetts requires an annual income of about \$85,000, according to the report. In Akron, Ohio, a family of four needs an annual income of about \$61,500, and a family in Tulsa, Oklahoma needs \$57,200. Many children in these cities are in families that are struggling to meet basic necessities but are not defined as “poor” or “low-income.”

Many children have parents who are employed but whose wages are insufficient to meet basic needs. Half of low-income children under age three and 28 percent

of poor children have at least one parent who works full-time. While 84 percent of children whose parents did not graduate high school live in low-income households, 50 percent of low-income children have at least one parent who has attended college. Forty-one percent of poor children have a parent who has attended college.

Low income families are also more likely to move and move more frequently. While rents have risen steadily since 2009, 71 percent of low-income children are in families that rent their homes.

During the US election campaign last year, Obama declared that “things have never been better,” a message he and Democratic Party candidate Hillary Clinton contrasted with Trump’s slogan of “Make America great again.” Obama cited stock market gains and employment statistics to support these claims.

The child poverty figures, however, expose the reality of social life in the United States. Most of the post-recession job growth occurred in low-paying, service sector jobs. American manufacture continued to decline—even in places where manufacturers continued to hire, they did so with lower wages and fewer benefits.

There is little reason to expect the economic prognosis for low-income children to improve as they reach adulthood. In an indication of economic insecurity in young adults, almost half of people in their early 20s require assistance from their parents with rent payments and other necessities, according to a recent report in the *New York Times*.

Forty percent of young adults between the ages of 22 and 24 require help, with a median assistance level of \$250 a month. Young adults living in metropolitan areas of one million people or greater are 30 percent more likely to need help from their parents. These

numbers have grown steadily. In the 1980s, fewer than 30 percent of this age group needed assistance.

The record of the Obama administration and the hostility of the Democratic Party to the working class opened the way for Trump to posture as an opponent of the “status quo” who would bring back jobs. However, the Trump administration, packed with billionaires and corporate CEOs, is preparing a vast intensification of the assault on the working class.

Throughout his campaign, Trump denounced programs such as SNAP (Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program). One of his campaign advisors, Jack Kingston, stated in 2013 that children who need free or reduced lunches should be made to sweep floors in order to “[get] the myth out of their head that there is such a thing as free lunch.” Trump has promised to cut over one million Americans off of SNAP and Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) by early 2017.

America's young children are essentially canaries in a mine. Like the decreasing ability of young adults to support themselves, their financial instability points to a greater level of economic instability for the entire working class.



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