

**Race and Poverty in California: Census 2000 Profiles**

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**Executive Summary**

Poverty rates provide one perspective on the economic well-being of groups and individuals. As measured on the decennial census, poverty status is determined based on responses to questions about income types and amounts. In accordance with the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Directive 14, the Census Bureau uses these income data in conjunction with poverty thresholds, set annually by the federal government, to determine who is “poor.” These thresholds vary depending on family size and composition, though they are not adjusted for geographic differences in the cost of living. This report documents poverty levels in California, summarizing them by nativity and citizenship status, age, and family type, as well as race and region.

According to 2000 Census data, 14.2 percent of California’s population lives below the poverty thresholds set by the federal government, a slightly higher rate than that for the overall U.S., 12.4 percent. Compared to 1990, the California poverty rate has increased from 12.5 percent, despite the U.S. poverty rate declining from 13.1 percent.

Foreign born residents of California are more likely than those born in the U.S. to be living below poverty, 19.1 and 12.5 percent, respectively. Of the foreign born population in the state, those who are not citizens are more likely, at a rate of 24.5 percent, than those who have become citizens through naturalization (10.6 percent) to be living in poverty.

In California, almost one in five children (19.5 percent) lives below poverty, compared to 13 percent of adults ages 18 to 64, and 8.1 percent of adults ages 65 and older.

When state poverty rates are compared by family type, married couples are the least likely to be living in poverty, at 6.8 percent, contrasted with 25.0 percent of female-headed families with no spouse and 15.0 percent of male-headed families with no spouse.

Poverty rates are highest for American Indians, Blacks, Latinos, and people identified on the census as Some Other Race (ranging from 21.9 to 24 percent in the state), lowest for Whites and Asians/Pacific Islanders (7.8 and 12.9 percent, respectively), and intermediate for people identified with Two or More Races (16.8 percent).

Overall regional poverty rates are highest in the Central Valley (20.5), Los Angeles (17.9), and Northern (16.9) regions of the state; lowest in the San Francisco Bay Area (8.6); and in between in the Southern (12.9), Sacramento Metropolitan (12.7), Coastal (11.7), and Eastern Mountain (11.6) areas.

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