

2018 POVERTY RATES

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



Women Disproportionately Affected by Poverty

An analysis of the 2018 American Community Survey by The Women's Foundation finds that women continue to be disproportionately affected by poverty in the District of Columbia, and that among women, single women with children and women of color are more likely to live below the poverty threshold—\$20,780 for a family of three in 2018.

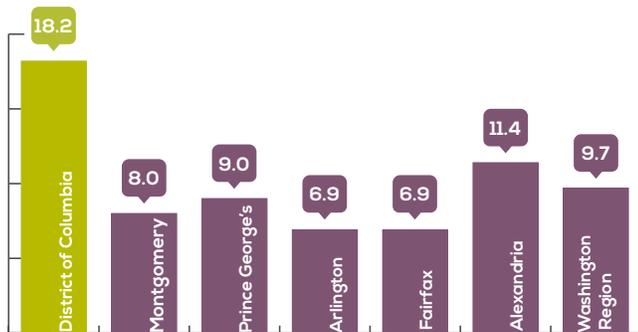


Fig 1. Women's Poverty Rates in the Washington Region, 2018
The Women's Foundation's analysis of the American Community Survey, 2018

Close to 108,055 residents in the District were living below the poverty line during 2018. More than half (63,899) were women and girls. This figure translates to a poverty rate of 18.2 percent, **by far the highest poverty rate for women and girls among the jurisdictions that comprise the Washington region.**¹ The poverty rate for men and boys in the District is 13.9 percent, also the highest among men and boys in the Washington region.

In the District of Columbia, poverty rates have fluctuated with the economy, but no long-term progress has been made. Women's poverty rates have remained well above men's poverty rates for the past decade.

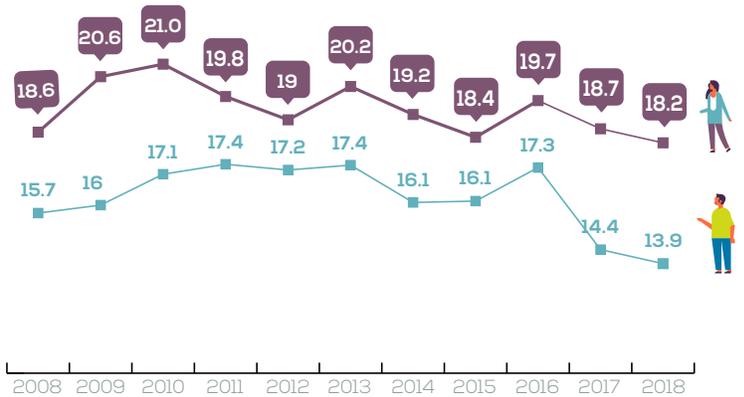


Fig 2. Poverty Rates in the District of Columbia, 2008-2018
The Women's Foundation's analysis of the American Community Survey, 2008-2018

Women Raising Families on Their Own

An estimated 11,675 families in DC with children under 18 had incomes below the poverty level in 2018—almost one third (27.2 percent) of all poor families in the Washington region. Single parent families—especially female-headed households—were more likely to live in poverty.

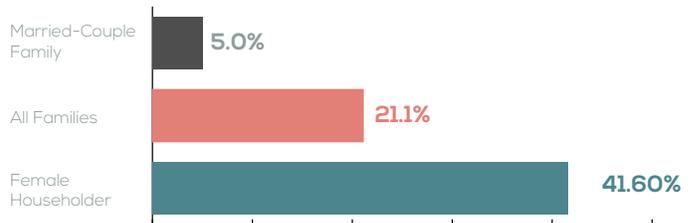


Fig 3. Poverty Rates for Families with Children under 18, 2018
The Women's Foundation's analysis of the American Community Survey, 2018

Female-headed households with children reached a poverty rate of 41.60 percent; while only about 5.0 percent of married-couple families in a comparable group lived below poverty. **Of families with children living in poverty in DC, 78.0 percent were headed by single women.**

Women's Poverty Across Racial and Ethnic Groups

Women of color experience disproportionate levels of poverty across racial and ethnic groups and have a greater probability of falling below the poverty threshold than men or their White counterparts.

Black and Latina women face high rates of poverty in the District of Columbia; 27.4 percent of Black women and 15.9 percent of Latinas live below the poverty level, poverty rates considerably higher than the 6.7 percent rate for White, non-Hispanic women.

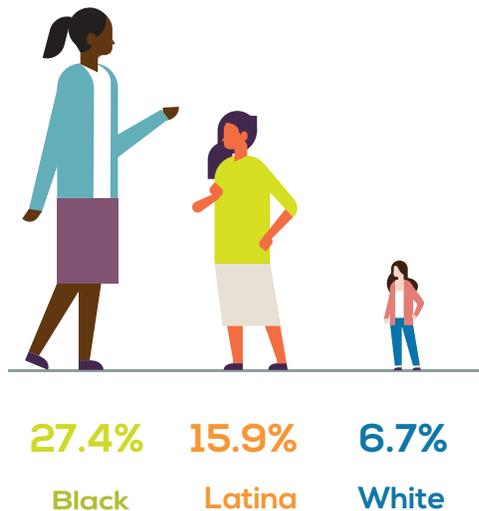


Fig 4. Poverty Rates by Race and Ethnicity, 2018
The Women's Foundation's analysis of the American Community Survey, 2018

DEFINING POVERTY

A family of three was considered to live below the poverty line in 2018 if their total pre-tax annual income was \$20,780 or less. Living with an income of \$41,560 for a family of three—twice the poverty level income—was still insufficient to make ends meet in our region during 2018. According to the Basic Economic Security Tables (BEST),² a family of three composed of one worker, an infant and a school-aged child requires an approximate annual income of \$85,092 in the District of Columbia to meet their basic needs without receiving any public or private assistance.

- 1 Estimates for the Washington region include data from: Washington, DC; Montgomery County, MD; Prince George's County, MD; Arlington County, VA; Alexandria City, VA; and Fairfax County, VA.
- 2 The BEST Index measures the income a working adult requires to meet his or her basic needs—without public or private assistance. Each BEST Index component is a conservative estimate of need, and the BEST does not include any “extras” such as vacations, entertainment, electronics, gifts or meals out. As a result, those living below an economically secure income may go without, make difficult choices among basic needs, or forgo economic security by not fully developing savings. For detailed information on expense components, including data sources and assumptions used in specific calculations, see the Index expenses and savings definitions. Additional information can be found in The Basic Economic Security Tables: United States Methodology and Supplemental Data, available at <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Basic-Economic-Security-Tables-United-States-Methodology-Report-2010-1.pdf>

This Fact Sheet was prepared by Claudia Williams, Program Officer at Washington Area Women's Foundation. To obtain more related data on the status of women and girls in the Washington region and details on the methodology to obtain such data please consult our issue briefs available at <https://thewomensfoundation.org/resources/>