

Child poverty in the United States

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Child Poverty in the United States

Elissa Knight

Abstract: According to the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP), more than 16 million children in the United States live in families with incomes below the federal poverty level, approximately \$23,550 a year for a family of four. However, research shows that on average, families need an income of about twice that amount to cover basic expenses. Poverty can inhibit children's development and contribute to social, emotional and behavioral issues. I obtained data from Census Bureau, listing the percent of children in the United States who live below the poverty level. I also obtained data which shows the breakdown of impoverished children by race across the United States over three years. I have used GIS to create two maps which show that Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and New Mexico have the highest percentages of children living in poverty with the largest percentage being Native American.

Results: To show the range of child poverty across the United States, I used GIS to map the percentage of children in poverty in each state. Figure 1 shows that a majority of states have between 12-20 percent of children living in poverty. Specifically, Mississippi and Louisiana have the most with 32.1 and 26.8 respectively. "Poverty affects children of all colors, contrary to stereotypes", says director of NCCP. Figure 2 shows the breakdown of child poverty by race. According to the NCCP, among America's poor children, 4.2 million are white, 4 million are Latino, 3.6 million are African American, 400,000 are Asian and 200,000 are American Indian. The data shows that while more white children are poor, as a percentage of the population, more minorities live in poor families.

Conclusion: Child poverty has been increasing and this data could be extremely helpful in regards to public policy. It is necessary to develop strategies that help parents succeed in the labor force. Income tax credits, child care assistance and benefits such as health insurance and paid sick leave can be critical to supporting income growth for low-wage workers. Poverty is a great threat to children's well-being but effective public policy can make a difference.

Children living in poverty in the United States over a three year period (2010-2013)

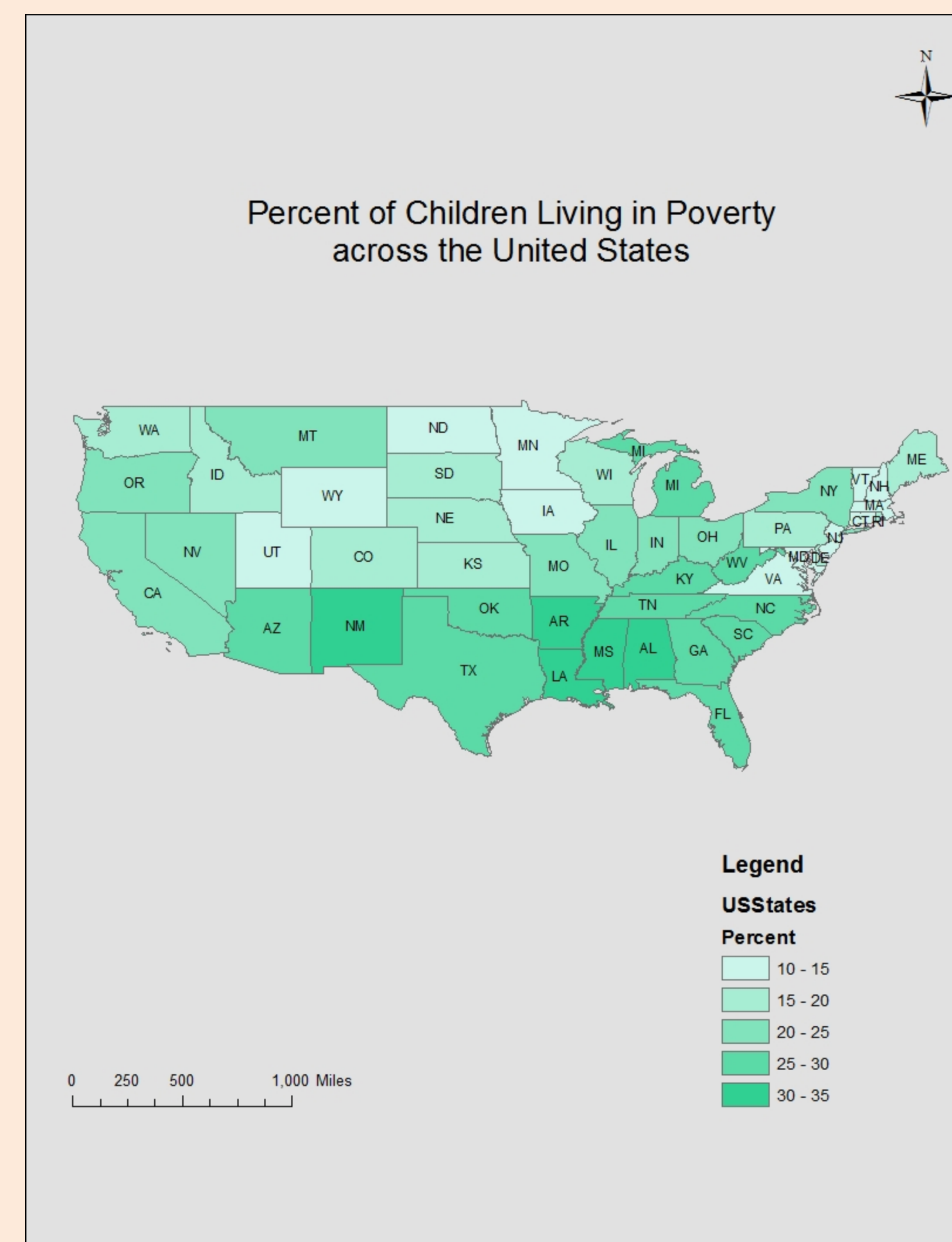


Figure 1. The above map of the U.S. depicts the percentage of children in each state who are below the poverty level.

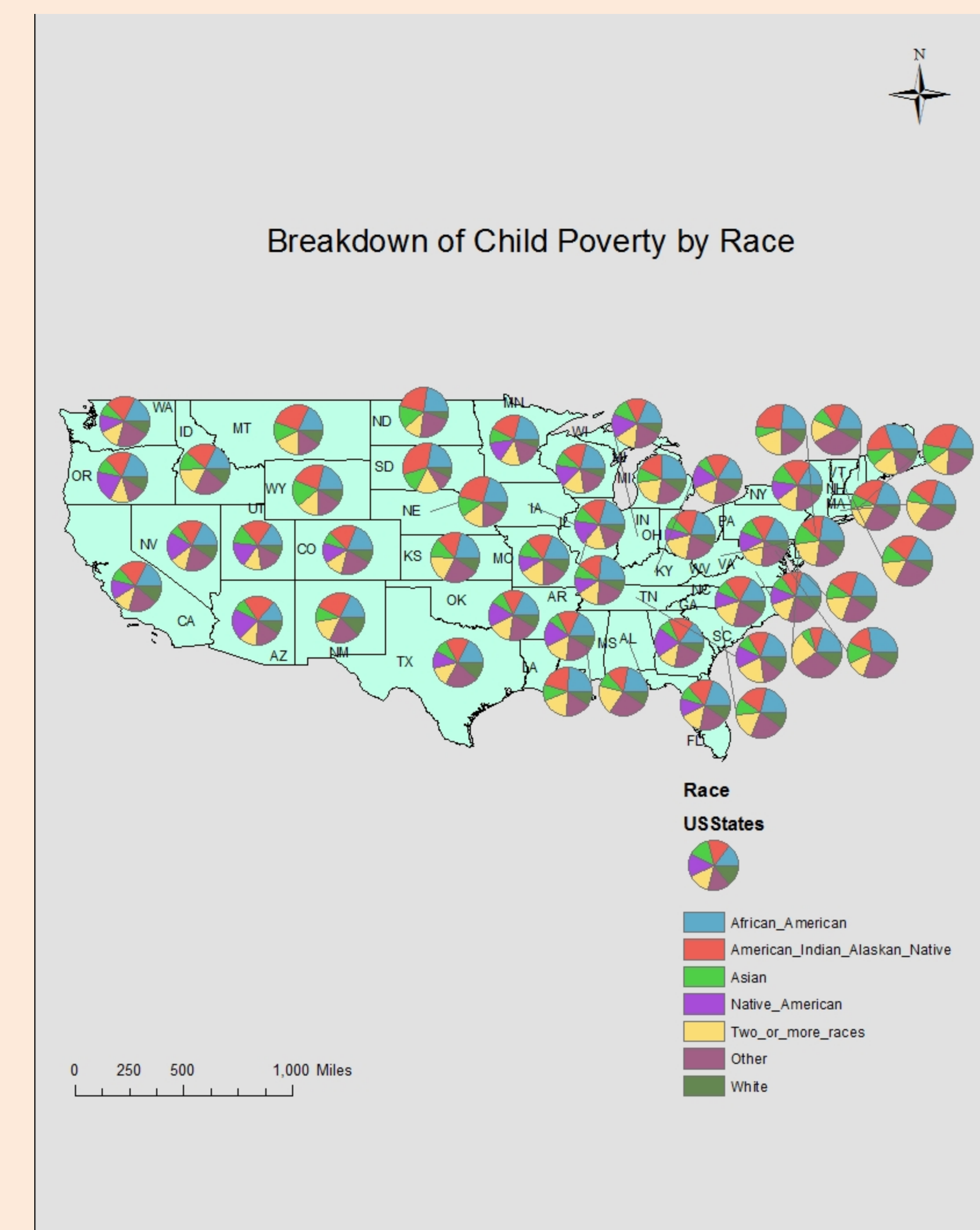


Figure 2. The above map of the US depicts a breakdown by race of children living in poverty.