

Monthly Poverty in 2022 Remains Elevated in February

3.4 Million More Children in Poverty in February 2022 than December 2021

Columbia University Center on Poverty and Social Policy

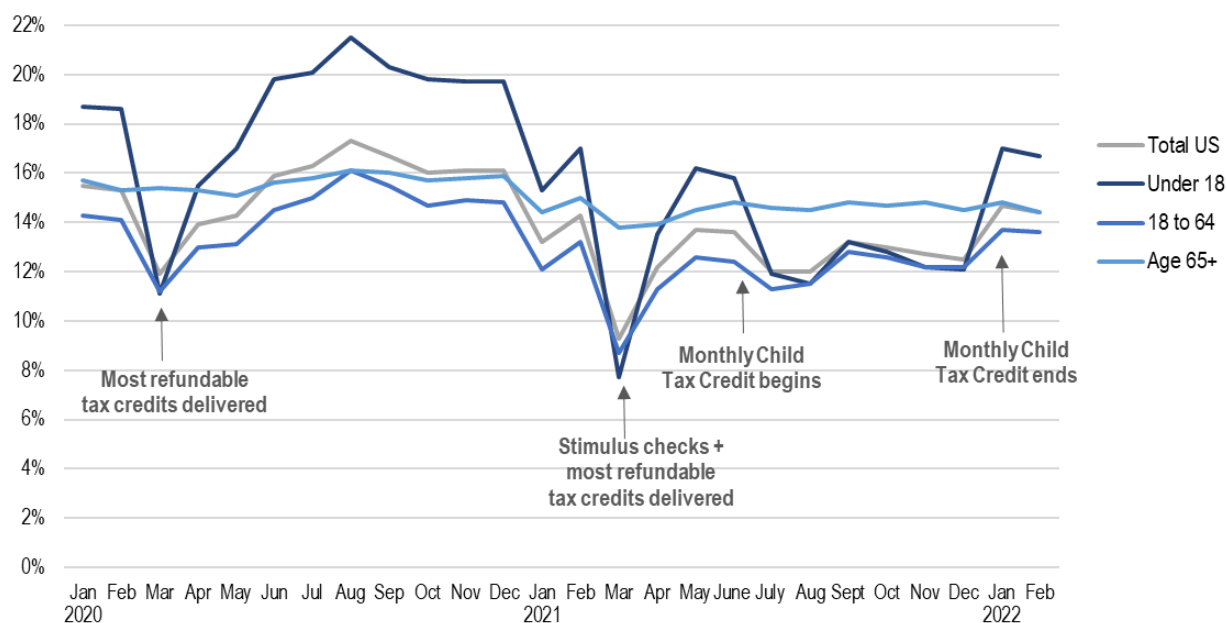
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Monthly poverty remained elevated in February 2022, with a 14.4 percent poverty rate for the total US population. This is a slight decrease from 14.7 percent in January 2022, but a continuation of the spike from the December 2021 monthly poverty rate of 12.5 percent. Overall, 6 million more individuals were in poverty in February relative to December. Figure 1 presents monthly poverty trends for the total US population and by age group from January 2020 to February 2022.

Figure 1: Trends in Monthly Poverty, by Age (Jan 2020–Feb 2022)



Center on Poverty and Social Policy (2022). Access data at: povertycenter.columbia.edu/forecasting-monthly-poverty-data.

Child poverty saw a small decline (0.3 percentage points) from 17.0 percent in January to 16.7 percent in February 2022. These levels also represent a continuation of the sharp increase in child poverty from December 2021, when the monthly child poverty rate was 12.1 percent. January 2022 marked the first month that the American Rescue Plan’s expanded Child Tax Credit monthly payments expired, and child poverty rates increased sharply in response. Monthly child poverty is 4.6

percentage points (38 percent) higher in February 2022 than December 2021, representing 3.4 million additional children in poverty in February relative to December. Table 1 breaks down the changes in child poverty between December 2021 and February 2022, both overall and by children’s race and ethnicity.

Table 1. Monthly Child Poverty Rates by Children's Race and Ethnicity

SPM POVERTY RATE (%)							
Children	December 2021	January 2022	February 2022	Percentage Pt. Difference (Jan vs. Feb)	Percent Change (Jan vs. Feb)	Percentage Pt. Difference (Dec vs. Feb)	Percent Change (Dec vs. Feb)
All	12.1%	17.0%	16.7%	-0.4%	-2.1%	4.6%	38.2%
Asian	11.9%	15.1%	16.3%	1.2%	7.6%	4.4%	36.6%
Black	19.5%	25.4%	24.9%	-0.6%	-2.2%	5.4%	27.5%
Latino	16.8%	23.9%	23.4%	-0.5%	-2.2%	6.6%	39.4%
White	7.5%	11.4%	11.3%	-0.1%	-0.6%	3.8%	51.4%

NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN POVERTY						
Children	December 2021	January 2022	February 2022	Change (Jan vs. Feb)	Change (Dec vs. Feb)	
All	8,912,000	12,574,000	12,315,000	-259,000	3,404,000	
Asian	519,000	659,000	709,000	50,000	190,000	
Black	2,175,000	2,837,000	2,774,000	-63,000	598,000	
Latino	3,165,000	4,509,000	4,410,000	-98,000	1,246,000	
White	2,750,000	4,189,000	4,165,000	-24,000	1,415,000	

Parolin, Collyer, and Curran (2022), Center on Poverty and Social Policy at Columbia University, Monthly SPM Poverty, February 2022. **Numbers rounded to the nearest thousand.*

Similar to the pattern for child poverty as a whole, small declines in monthly poverty rates from January to February 2022 were seen for White children (0.1 percentage points), Latino children (0.5 percentage points), and Black children (0.6 percentage points); Asian children, by contrast, saw an increase (1.2 percentage points). But the differences between February 2022 and December 2021, the last month in which the expanded Child Tax Credit monthly payments were in place, remain stark.

One in four Black children in the United States lived with a monthly income below the poverty line in February 2022, an increase of close to 600,000 Black children from December 2021 (a 28 percent rise). Latino children experienced the largest percentage point increase, seeing a 6.6 percentage point (40 percent) increase in child poverty from December 2021 to February 2022; this increase amounted to 1.25 million additional Latino children in poverty in February 2022 compared to December 2021. Asian children experienced a 37 percent rise in their child poverty rate, equal to 200,000 more children in poverty, over the same period.

The impact of tax season on monthly poverty in 2022

In a monthly poverty framework, poverty rates often decline during the tax season when families file for and receive their annual tax refunds, including important tax credit payments. Because these funds are delivered in one-time, lump-sum payments, they contribute to large reductions in poverty in the months they are delivered (see [Parolin, Curran, Matsudaira, Waldfogel, and Wimer 2022](#) for more on methods). The impact of annual tax refunds on monthly poverty is evident in Figure 1, where March 2020 and 2021 saw the lowest poverty rates in each year. Between July and December 2021, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) paid out half the value of the 2021 Child Tax Credit in six months of advance monthly payments worth up to \$250 per child aged 6 to 17 and up to \$300 per child aged under 6, reaching over 61 million children in over 36 million households. Families who file a federal tax return will receive the balance of their 2021 Child Tax Credit at tax time in 2022. Delivery of the second half of the Child Tax Credit, alongside other family tax credits such as the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit, is likely to result in substantial, but temporary, dips in monthly poverty rates for the US population as a whole and for children specifically in March and April of 2022. Following the conclusion of tax season, however, it is likely that monthly child poverty rates could be persistently high through the rest of 2022 absent the continuation of an expanded Child Tax Credit, further policy interventions, or strong improvements in the labor market.

Methods

Our monthly poverty framework estimates monthly child poverty rates based on the income a family unit (as defined by the [Supplemental Poverty Measure](#)) receives in a given month. For full methodological details on our framework for measuring monthly poverty rates, please see [Parolin, Curran, Matsudaira, Waldfogel, and Wimer 2022](#).

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