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## Childhood Poverty Rates in New York City Between 1990 and 2010

Karen Okigbo

*Center for Latin American, Caribbean, and Latino Studies*

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# CLACLS

Center for Latin American, Caribbean & Latino Studies

## Childhood Poverty Rates in New York City between 1990 and 2010

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The Center for Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies is a research institute that works for the advancement of the study of Latin America, the Caribbean, and Latinos in the United States in the doctoral programs at the CUNY Graduate Center. One of its major priorities is to provide funding and research opportunities to Latino students at the Ph.D. level.

The Center established and helps administer an interdisciplinary specialization in Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies in the Masters of Arts in Liberal Studies program.

The Latino Data Project was developed with the goal of making information available on the dynamically growing Latino population of the United States and especially New York City through the analysis of extant data available from a variety of sources such as the U.S. Census Bureau, the National Institute for Health, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and state and local-level data sources.

All Latino Data Project reports are available at <http://web.gc.cuny.edu/lastudies>

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## Executive Summary

This report examines trends in childhood poverty in New York City between 1990 and 2010, using data on poverty rates from the U.S. Census Bureau.<sup>1</sup> In this report, children are defined as those people 14 years of age and under. The data indicate three key trends. First, the rate of childhood poverty in New York City was substantially higher than the national childhood poverty rate in 1990, 2000, and 2010.<sup>2</sup> Second, the City's childhood poverty rate did not change over the twenty year period considered here. Third, Latinos had the highest childhood poverty rate among the City's major race/ethnic groups in all three census years. This report explores the City's childhood poverty rates by sex, race/ethnicity, and nativity, among the five largest Latino national subgroups in New York City, and within the City's five boroughs.

**The childhood poverty rate in New York City was steady over time, at 31% in 1990, 32% in 2000, and 32% in 2010, and those rates were significantly higher than national childhood poverty rates (22% in 2010).<sup>3</sup>**

**Greater percentages of Latino children were in poverty compared with children in the City's other major race/ethnic groups in 1990, 2000, and 2010.** The percentage of Latino children in poverty was 46% in 1990 and 41% in 2010. By comparison, the percentage of non-Hispanic black children in poverty was 35% in 1990 and 2010. Asian and non-Hispanic white children had the lowest childhood poverty rates. Among Asian children, the poverty rate was 18% in 1990 and 24% in 2010. Among non-Hispanic whites, the childhood poverty rate was 15% in 1990 and 20% in 2010. Despite low childhood poverty rates non-Hispanic white and Asian children were the only two race/ethnic groups that experienced increasing childhood poverty rates between 1990 and 2010.

Among the City's five largest Latino national subgroups there were some noteworthy differences in the childhood poverty rates.

**Half of all Puerto Rican children in New York City were living in poverty in 2010.** Of all Latino subgroups, Puerto Ricans had the highest childhood poverty rates in 1990 (52%), 2000 (46%), and 2010 (51%).

**Mexican children experienced a large increase in childhood poverty rates,** which rose from 32% in 1990 to 43% in 2010. In 2010, Mexicans had the second highest childhood poverty rate.

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<sup>1</sup> This study uses the American Community Survey PUMS (Public Use Microdata Series) data for all years considered here released by the Census Bureau and reorganized for public use by the Minnesota Population Center, University of Minnesota, IPUMSusa, (<https://usa.ipums.org/usa/index.shtml>). See Public Use Microdata Series Steven Ruggles, J. Trent Alexander, Katie Genadek, Ronald Goeken, Matthew B. Schroeder, and Matthew Sobek. Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 5.0 [Machine-readable database]. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> A United States Census Bureau report released in September 2014 indicated that the U.S. childhood poverty rate 20% in 2013. See Carmen DeNavas-Walt, Bernadette D. Proctor. "Income and Poverty in the United States: 2013" (U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, U.S. Census Bureau, September 2014) available on the internet at <http://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2014/demo/p60-249.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/acsbr10-05.pdf>

**Dominicans were the only Latino group that saw declining rates of childhood poverty, which dropped from 51% in 1990 to 39% in 2010.**

**Colombian children had the lowest poverty rates in all three census years, at approximately 20%. Ecuadorians also had relatively low poverty rates between 1990 (30%) and 2010 (34%).**

**The percentages of children in poverty in Queens and Staten Island increased between 1990 and 2010, whereas the childhood poverty rates decreased in Manhattan.**

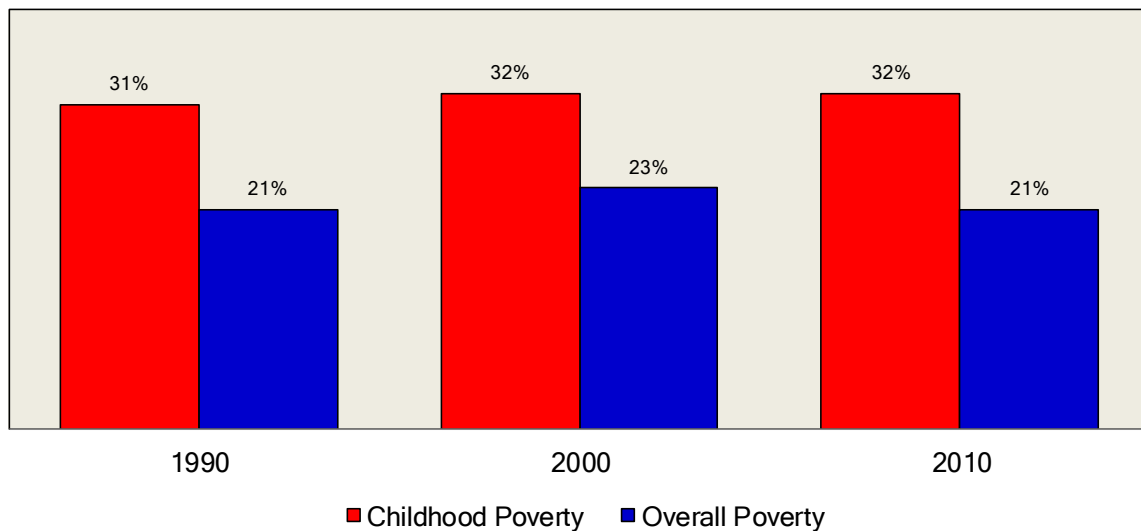
**The Bronx had the highest percentage of childhood poverty between 1990 and 2010, and those rates were steady at approximately 45% in each census year. The childhood poverty rate in Brooklyn was stable over time, at about 35%. Brooklyn had the second highest childhood poverty rate in 2000 and 2010.**

## Trends in Childhood Poverty Rates

The childhood poverty rate in New York City was dramatically higher than the City's overall poverty rate between 1990 and 2010. In 1990, 31% of children were in poverty, whereas the poverty rate among the City's total population was only 21%. The childhood poverty rate was steady at 32% in 2000, compared to the City's overall poverty rate of 23%. In 2010, the childhood poverty rate was 32%, whereas the overall poverty rate was only 21%. For further comparison, in 2010 the national childhood poverty rate was only 22%.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, in every census year considered here the childhood poverty rate in New York City was substantially higher than both the City's overall poverty rate and the national childhood poverty rate.

Figure 1  
Childhood Poverty and Overall Poverty Rates  
New York City, 1990 - 2010



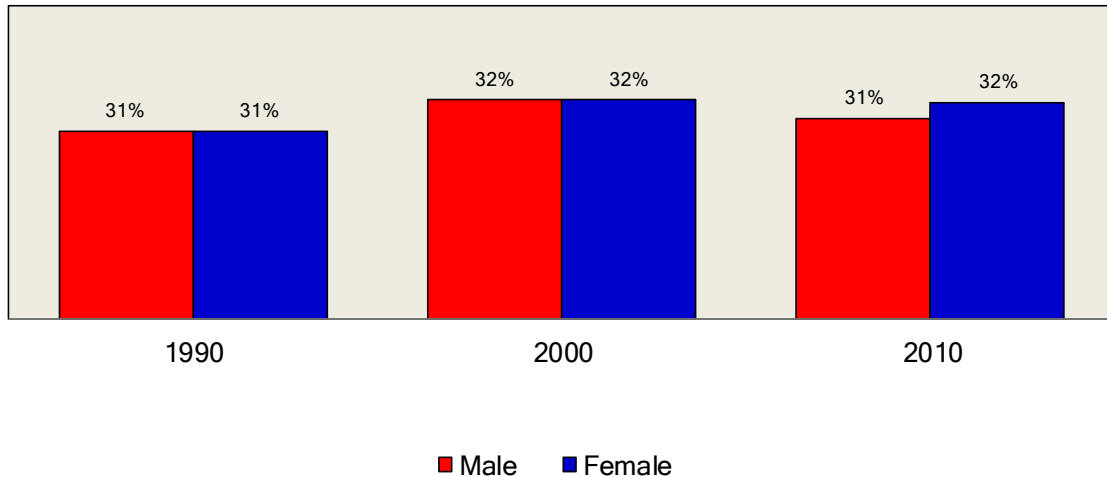
## Trends in Childhood Poverty Rates by Sex of Child

Childhood poverty rates in New York City between 1990 and 2010 were not influenced by the sex of the child. In 1990, the percentage of male and female children in poverty was 31%, respectively. In 2000, that number was 32% for both male and female children. In 2010, the percentage of male children in poverty was 31% and the percentage of female children in poverty was 32%. (See figure 2).

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/acsbr10-05.pdf>



Figure 2  
Percentage of Male and Female Children in Poverty  
New York City, 1990 - 2010

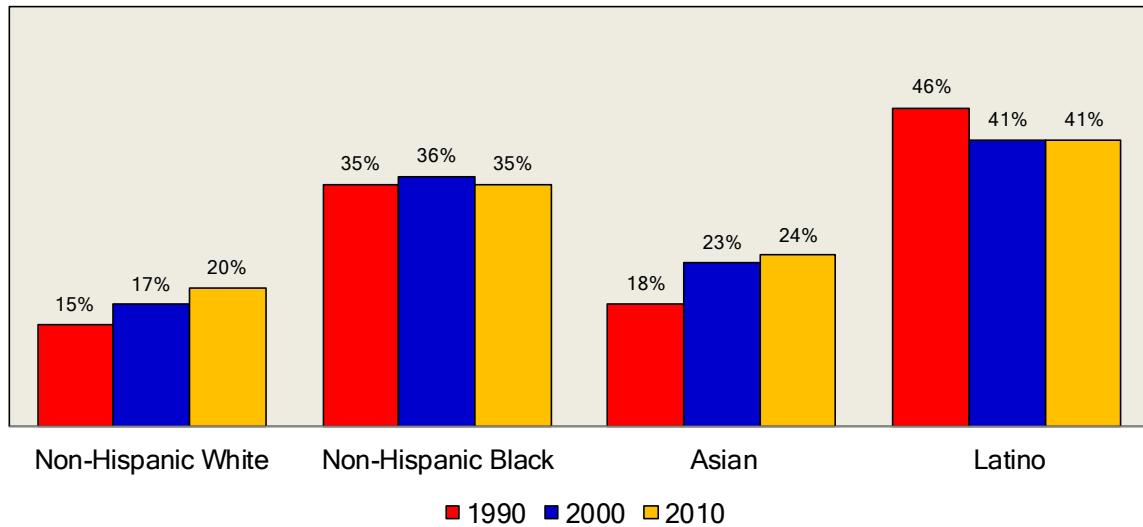


### Trends in Childhood Poverty Rates by Race/Ethnicity of Child

Among the major race/ethnic groups in New York City, the Latino population had the largest percentage of children in poverty in 1990, 2000, and 2010. In 1990, the percentage of Latino children in poverty was 46%, and decreased to 41% in both 2000 and 2010. (See figure 3). Although the percentage of Latino children in poverty dropped between 1990 and 2010, it must be noted that these rates were substantially higher than the poverty rates among other race/ethnic groups in New York City. This trend is likely related to the lower levels of educational attainment among Latinos compared to other race/ethnic groups.

Non-Hispanic blacks had the second highest percentage of children in poverty in each census year. In 1990, 35% of non-Hispanic black children were living in poverty, which was steady at 36% in 2000 and 35% in 2010. Asians had relatively low percentages of children in poverty, with only 18% in 1990. That rate increased to 23% in 2000, and 24% in 2010. Non-Hispanic whites had the lowest rates of childhood poverty. In 1990, just 15% of non-Hispanic white children lived in poverty. That number increased to 17% in 2000, and then rose to 20% in 2010. (See figure 3). Unlike Latino and non-Hispanic black children, the percentage of non-Hispanic white and Asian children in poverty increased between 1990 and 2010.

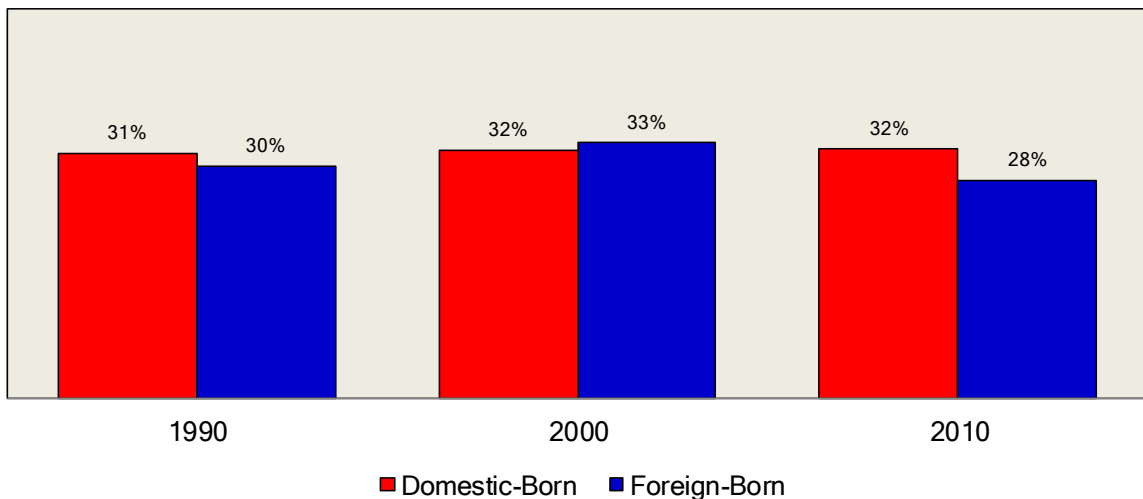
Figure 3  
Percentage of Children in Poverty by Race/Ethnicity  
New York City, 1990 - 2010



**Trends in Childhood Poverty Rates by Nativity of Child**

There was little difference in childhood poverty rates between the City’s domestic-born and foreign-born populations. In 1990, 31% of the City’s domestic-born children and 30% of foreign-born children were living in poverty. In 2000, the percentage of domestic-born children living in poverty was steady at 32%, and the percentage of foreign-born children in poverty was 33%. In 2010, the percentage of domestic-born children in poverty (32%) was marginally higher than the percentage of foreign-born children in poverty (28%). (See figure 4).

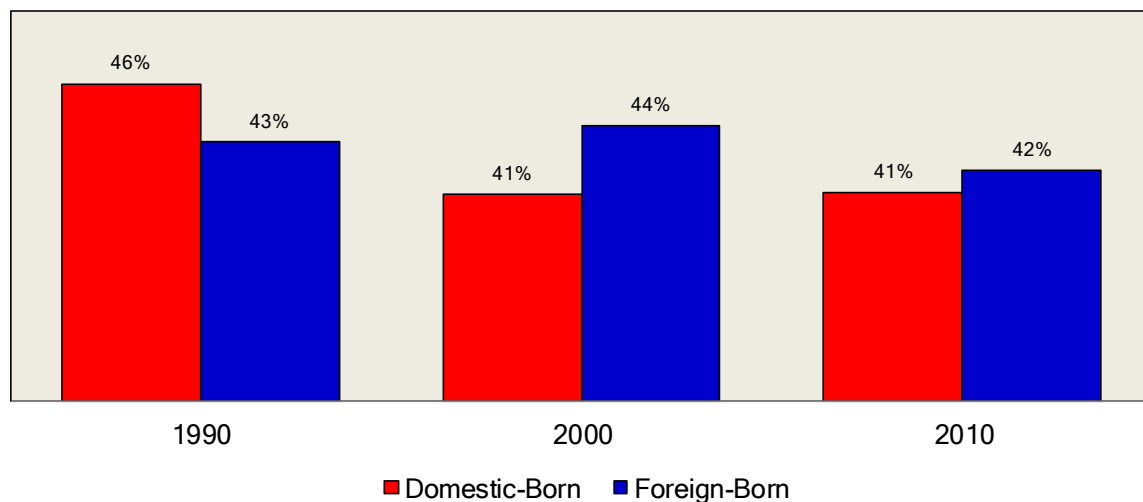
Figure 4  
Percentage of Domestic-Born and Foreign-Born  
Children in Poverty  
New York City, 1990 - 2010



### Trends in Latino Childhood Poverty Rates by Nativity of Child

The childhood poverty rates for domestic-born and foreign-born Latino children were significantly higher than the City's overall childhood poverty rates. There were minimal differences between domestic-born and foreign-born Latinos' childhood poverty rates over the twenty years considered in this report. In 1990, 46% of the City's domestic-born Latino children and 43% of foreign-born Latino children were living in poverty. In 2000, more foreign-born Latino children were in poverty than domestic-born Latino children. That year, the percentage of domestic-born Latino children living in poverty was 41%, and the percentage of foreign-born Latino children in poverty was 44%. In 2010, the childhood poverty rate among domestic-born Latino children was 41% and that percentage was 42% among foreign-born children. (See figure 5).

Figure 5  
Percentage of Domestic-Born and Foreign-Born  
Latino Children in Poverty  
New York City, 1990 - 2010



### Trends in Childhood Poverty Rates among the Five Largest Latino National Subgroups

Mexicans experienced dramatic increases in rates of childhood poverty between 1990 and 2010. In 1990, 32% of Mexican children lived in poverty, which increased to 41% living in poverty in 2000. In 2010, that poverty rate increased to 43%. This trend could be a reflection of the large numbers of foreign-born Mexicans that arrived in the City across those years. Because foreign-born Latinos tend to have lower levels of income than domestic-born Latinos, they are likely to have higher poverty rates.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> See "Latinas in New York City: A Comparison of Education and Income, 1990 - 2010." Available on the internet at [http://www.gc.cuny.edu/CUNY\\_GC/media/CUNY-Graduate-Center/PDF/Centers/CLACLS/Latinas-in-New-York-City-Education-and-Income-1990-2010.pdf](http://www.gc.cuny.edu/CUNY_GC/media/CUNY-Graduate-Center/PDF/Centers/CLACLS/Latinas-in-New-York-City-Education-and-Income-1990-2010.pdf).

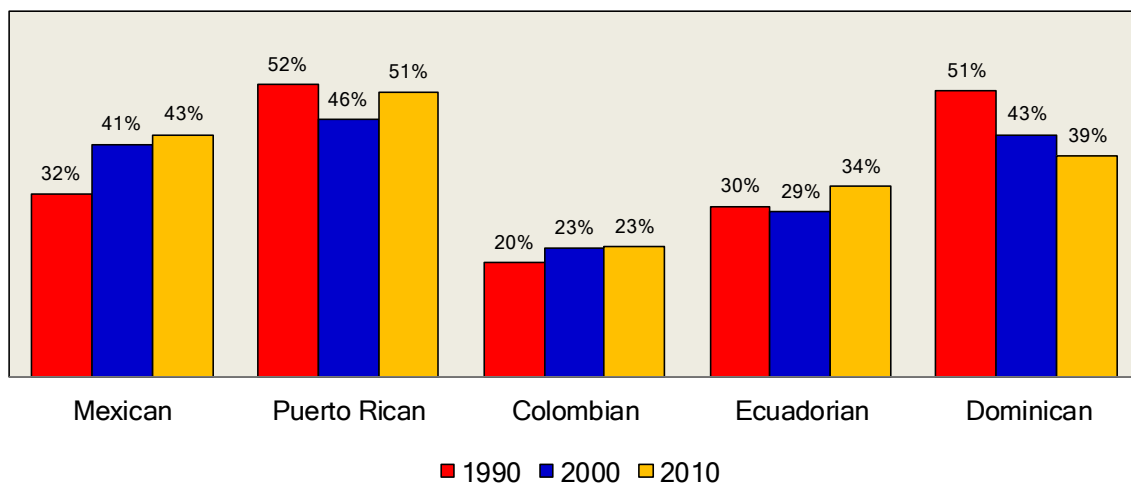
Puerto Ricans had the highest percentage of children living in poverty in 1990 (52%), 2000 (46%), and 2010 (51%). Thus, there was no long-term change in poverty rates among Puerto Rican children in the City between 1990 and 2010.

Among Colombians, childhood poverty rates were the lowest of all Latino subgroups and remained stable between 1990 and 2010. In 1990, 20% of Colombian children were living in poverty. That rate was 23% in 2000, and remained at about 23% in 2010. This trend is likely due to the high levels of educational attainment and income among the Colombian population compared to the other Latino national subgroups.

Poverty rates were relatively steady among Ecuadorian children. In 1990, 30% were living in poverty, which decreased to 29% in 2000. This rate then increased to 34% in 2010.

Dominicans were the only Latino national subgroup whose childhood poverty rate decreased between 1990 and 2010. In 1990, 51% of Dominican children were living in poverty. At that time, Dominicans had the second highest childhood poverty rate. The percentage of Dominican children living in poverty decreased to 43% in 2000 and 39% in 2010, a significant decline over the twenty year period. (See figure 6).

Figure 6  
 Percentage of Children in Poverty among the Five Largest Latino National Subgroups  
 New York City, 1990 - 2010



### Trends in Childhood Poverty Rates among the Five New York City Boroughs

The Bronx had the highest percentage of childhood poverty between 1990 and 2010, and those rates were steady at approximately 45% in each census year.

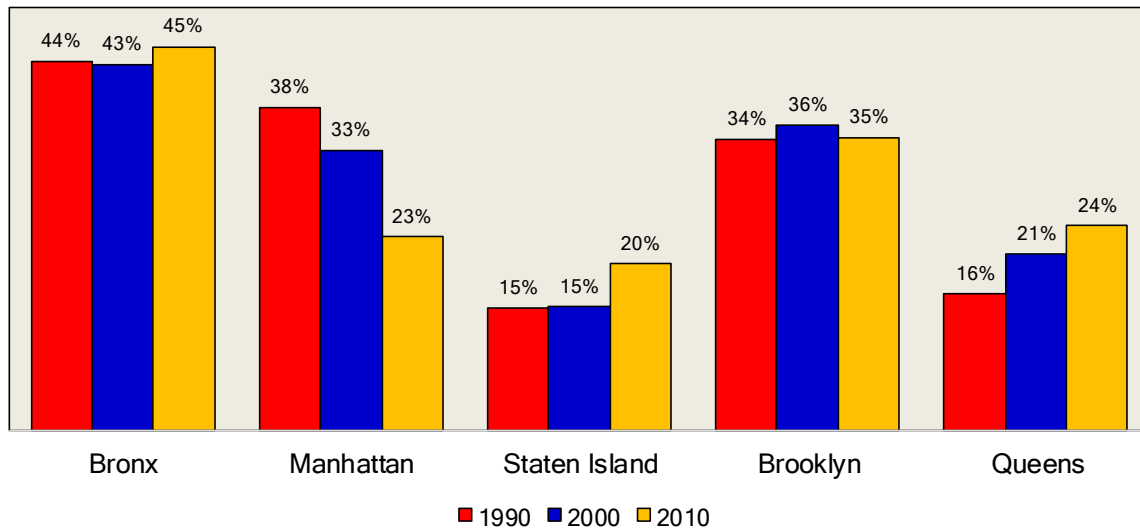
In 1990, Manhattan had the second highest percentage of children living in poverty, at 38%. That poverty rate decreased to 33% in 2000 and 23% in 2010. Manhattan was the only borough to see steady decline in childhood poverty rates.

Staten Island had the lowest percentage of children living in poverty in all three census years. In both 1990 and 2000, 15% of children in Staten Island lived in poverty. By 2010, that rate increased to 20%.

The childhood poverty rate in Brooklyn was stable over time, at about 35% in each census year. Brooklyn had the third highest childhood poverty rate in 1990, and the second highest in 2000 and 2010.

The percentage of children in poverty in Queens increased substantially between 1990 and 2010. The childhood poverty rate in 1990 was 16%, and increased to 24% in 2010. (See figure 7).

Figure 7  
Percentage of Childhood Poverty within the Five Boroughs  
New York City, 1990 - 2010



## Summary of Key Findings

- In 2010, the **childhood poverty rate in New York City (32%)** was dramatically higher than the national poverty rate (22%).
- The City's **childhood poverty rate did not change** between 1990 (31%) and 2010 (32%).
- **The rates of childhood poverty in New York City were consistently higher than the City's overall poverty rate** between 1990 and 2010.
- **Latino children** had substantially **higher** poverty rates compared to children of other race/ethnic groups, at 46% in 1990 and 41% in 2010.
- Neither sex nor nativity influenced rates of childhood poverty.
- **Mexican children** had a **large increase** in childhood poverty rates, which rose from 32% in 1990 to 43% in 2010.
- **Puerto Rican children** had the **highest percentage** of children living in poverty in 1990 (52%), 2000 (46%), and 2010 (51%).
- **Dominicans** were the only Latino group to see **declining rates** of childhood poverty, which dropped from 51% in 1990 to 39% in 2010.
- **Colombian children** had the **lowest** poverty rates in all three census years considered here, at approximately 20%.
- **Ecuadorians** also had **relatively low** childhood poverty rates between 1990 (30%) and 2010 (34%).
- Childhood poverty rates in **Queens and Staten Island increased** between 1990 and 2010, whereas the childhood poverty rates **decreased in Manhattan** during that period.
- The **Bronx had the highest percentage** of childhood poverty in each census year, at approximately 45% in each census year.
- The childhood poverty rate in **Brooklyn was stable** over time, at about 35% each census year. Brooklyn had the **second highest** childhood poverty rate in 2000 and 2010.