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The Child Population in the Mountain West

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THE CHILD POPULATION IN THE MOUNTAIN WEST

Demography Fact Sheet No. 17 | June 2021

Prepared by: Marie A. Falcone, Eshaan Vakil, Caitlin J. Saladino, and William E. Brown, Jr.

PURPOSE:

This fact sheet explores the demographics of the child population (under 18 years old) in the Mountain West states of Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah from 2010 to 2019. We explore data from a March 2021 report by Brookings Institution senior fellow, William H. Frey titled, “The demographic case for investing in America’s children.”¹ Most Mountain West states experienced a decline in their child populations between 2010 and 2019. The child populations in these states are dominated by children of color, most of whom are living in high levels of poverty.

ABOUT THE DATA:

Frey’s² analysis on age demographics in the United States utilizes data from the U.S. Census Bureau. The data include the share of the child population over time. Frey’s analysis also shows that the child share of the population in the United States has decreased, from 35.7 percent in 1960, to 22.1 percent in 2020.

Between 2010 and 2019, forty-four states experienced a decline in their white child populations.³ Children of color now make up much of the child population in the United States. This fact sheet also explores rates of child poverty rate in the Mountain West, or the percentage of children in each state that are living in poverty as reported by each state government.

KEY FINDINGS:

1. Utah is one of just six states nationally with an increase in the population of white children between 1960 and 2020.
2. Between 2010 and 2019, 4 Mountain West states increased their child populations, ranging from 0.7% (Arizona) to 6.9% (Utah); Colorado (2.8%) and Nevada (4.2%) experienced more moderate increases. New Mexico is the only Mountain West state to experience a decline in the number of children, falling 6.9%.
3. Mountain West states vary in child poverty rates. The states with the lowest rate of child poverty are Utah (10%) and Colorado (11%). Nevada (17%) and Arizona (19%) represent a middling cluster of child poverty. Finally, 1 in 4 children in New Mexico (25%) are living in poverty.

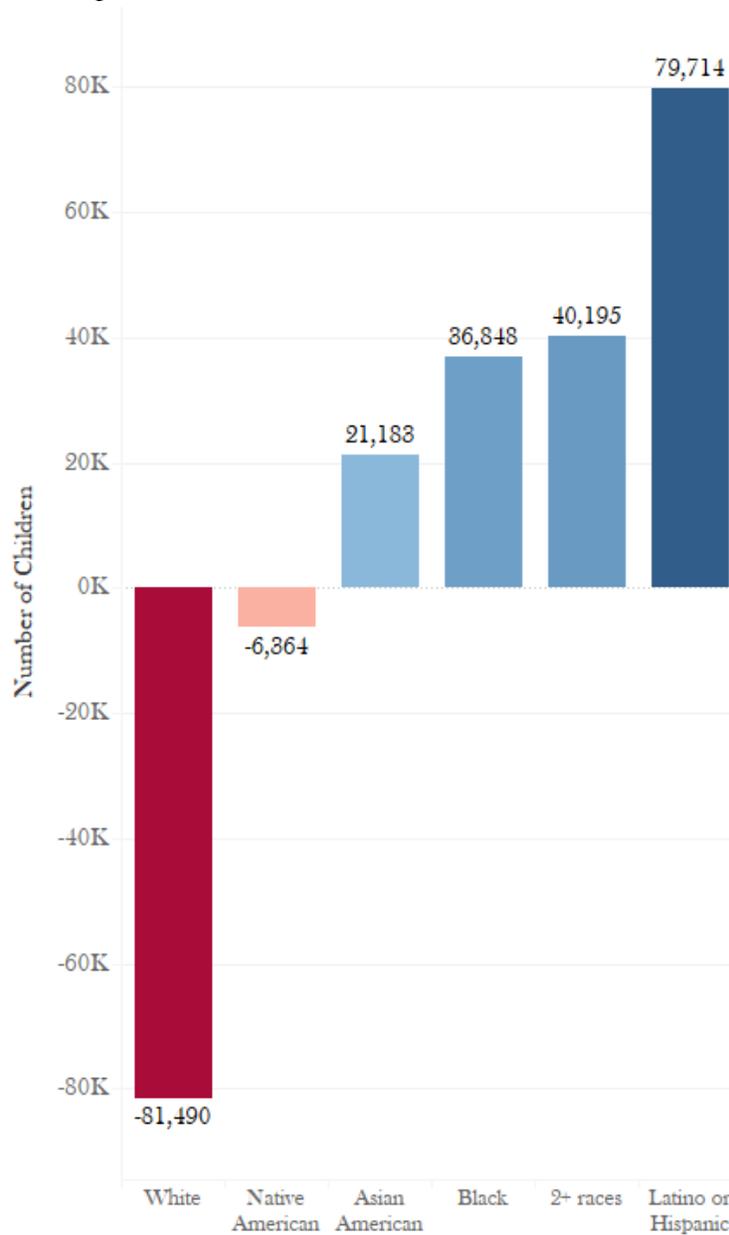
¹ William H. Frey, “The demographic case for investing in America’s children,” March 2021, The Brookings Institution (www.brookings.edu/research/the-demographic-case-for-investing-in-americas-children/)

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

Figure 1 depicts the change in the total number of children in the Mountain West region by racial group from 2010 to 2019. The numbers included for each racial group are a sum of totals in the Mountain West states of Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah. Region wide, there was a decrease of 81,490 white and 6,364 Native American children. All other racial groups saw an increase in population. The Latino /Hispanic population in the Mountain West saw the largest change, with an increase of 79,714 children.

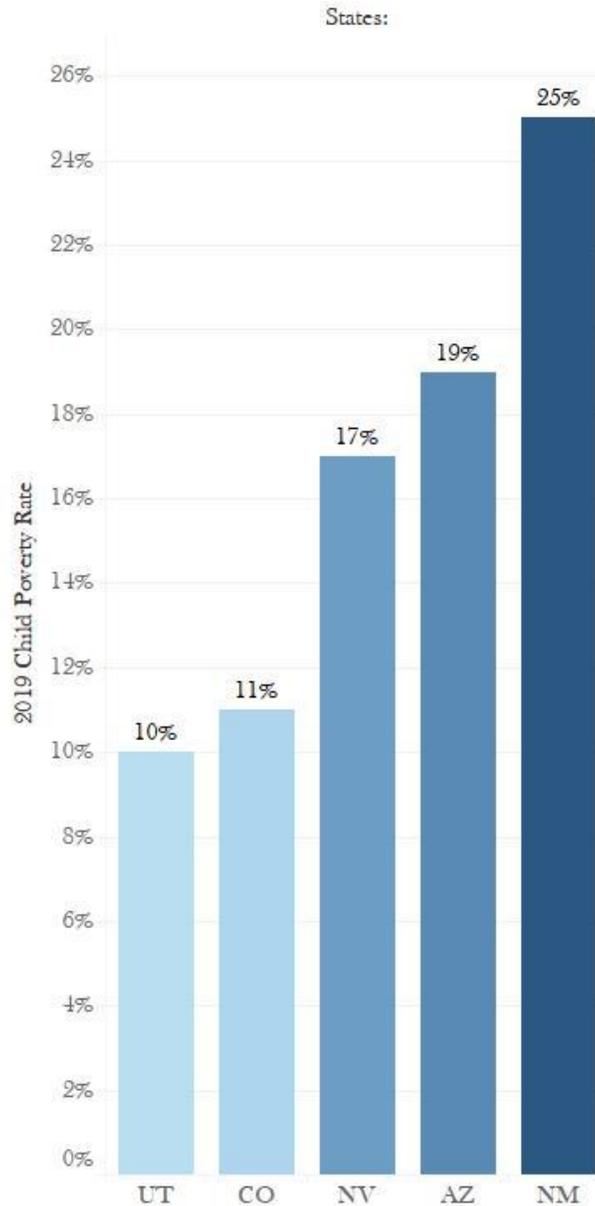
Figure 1: 2010 to 2019 Change in Total Number of Children in the Mountain West, by Racial Group



* Adapted from William H. Frey, The Brookings Institution, “The demographic case for investing in America’s children,” March 2021, (<https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-demographic-case-for-investing-in-americas-children/>).

Figure 2 shows 2019 child poverty rates in the Mountain West by state. The Mountain West states fall into three clusters: Utah (10%) and Colorado (11%) have the lowest child poverty in the Mountain West, followed by a middle cluster made up of Nevada (17%) and Arizona (19%). New Mexico (25%) has a higher rate of child poverty than any other Mountain West state.

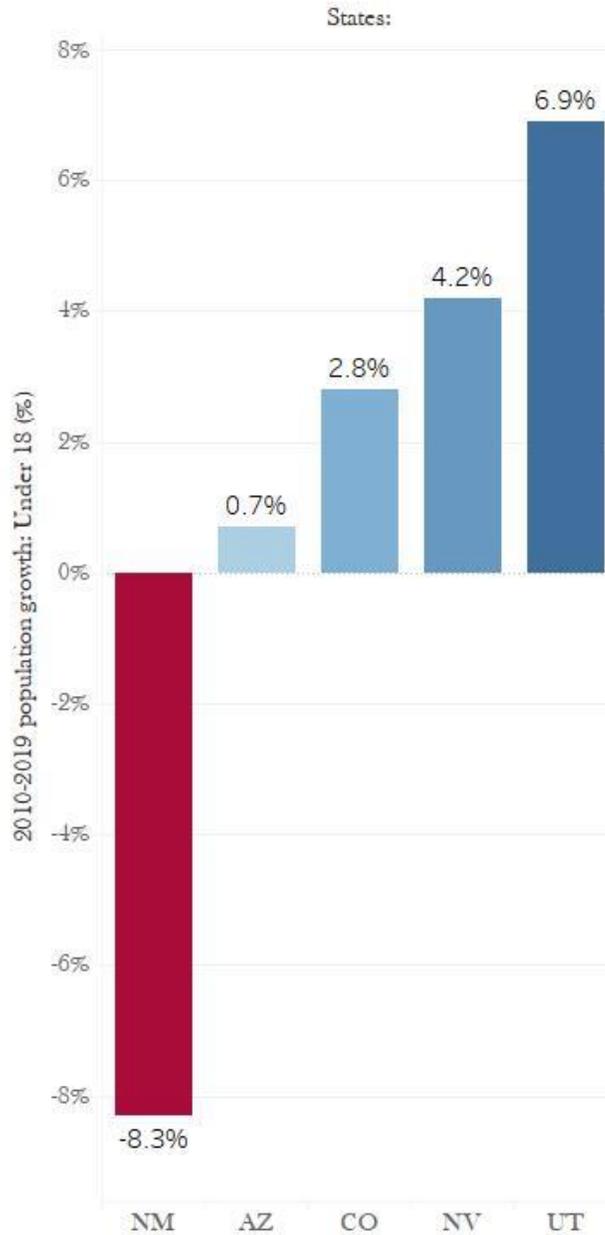
Figure 2: 2019 Child Poverty Rates in the Mountain West, by State



* Adapted from William H. Frey, The Brookings Institution, “The demographic case for investing in America’s children,” March 2021, (<https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-demographic-case-for-investing-in-americas-children/>).

Figure 3 illustrates the change in the child population of Mountain West states from 2010 to 2019 as a percentage change from the 2010 child population. New Mexico is the only state to experience a decrease in the percentage of its child population, falling 8.3%. All other Mountain West states experienced an increase in their child populations. The child population increased 0.7% in Arizona, 2.8% in Colorado, 4.2% in Nevada, and Utah saw the largest increase with 6.9%.

Figure 3: 2010 to 2019 Percentage Change in Child Population in the Mountain West, by State



* Adapted from William H. Frey, The Brookings Institution, "The demographic case for investing in America's children," March 2021, (<https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-demographic-case-for-investing-in-americas-children/>).