



America's Youth: The Need for Basic Necessities

A Study Conducted by Morar Consulting for JCPenney

April 2017

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Background/Methodology

In April 2017, JCPenney commissioned a comprehensive audit of secondary research around the issue of access to basic necessities among low-income families. The audit, performed by M Booth, a global communications company, found that lack of access to basic items such as socks and underwear is a pressing issue among low-income families and children, and not having these basic items is believed to have a detrimental impact on children's emotional wellbeing and potentially their outcomes in school and life. However, little quantitative data existed to support these assumptions.

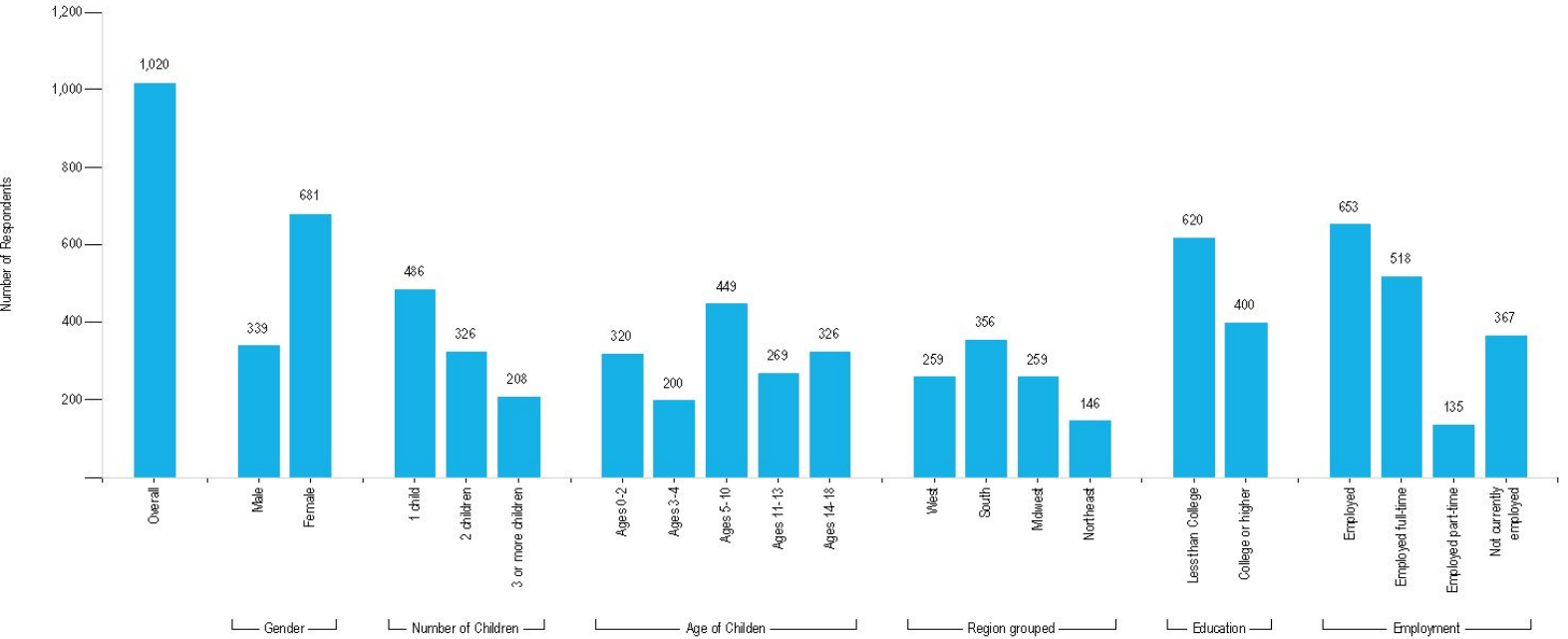
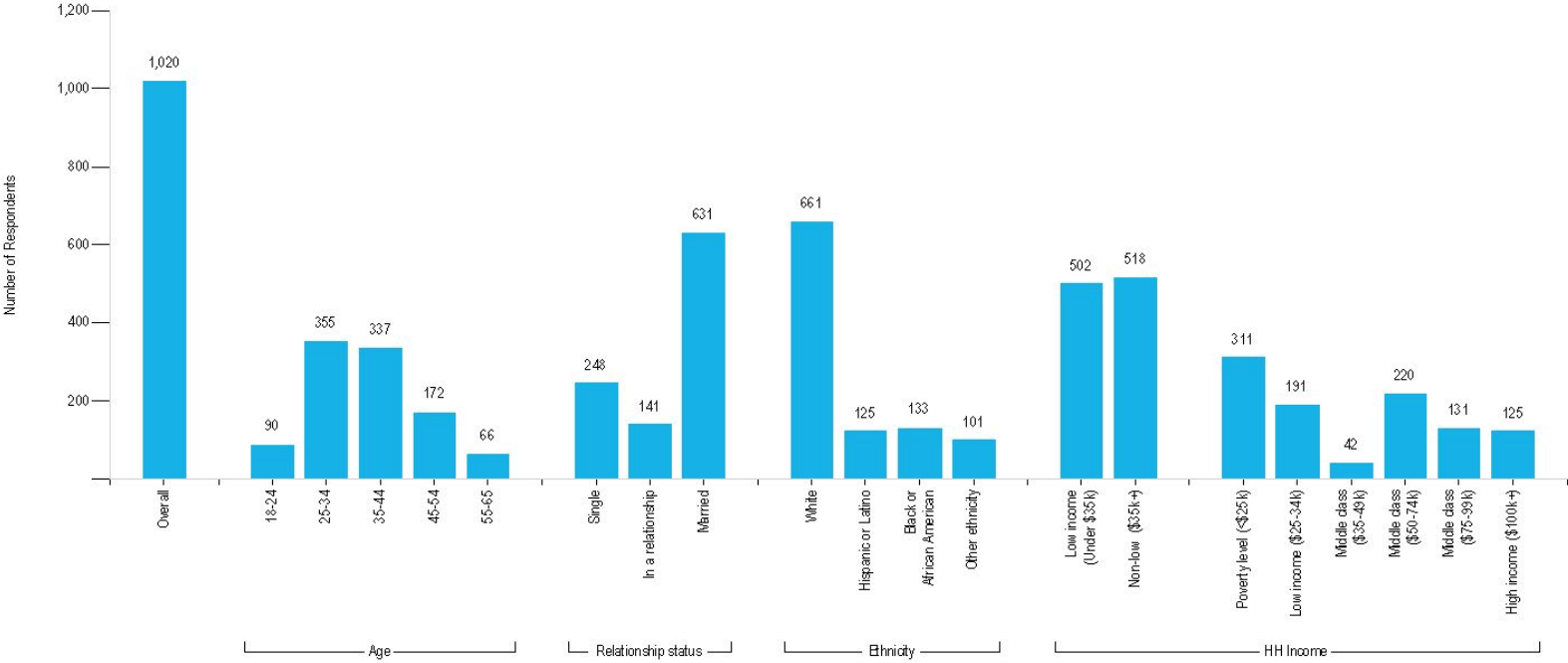
Following the audit, JCPenney commissioned a US-wide online survey. The survey was conducted by a third-party global research specialist, Morar Consulting, to understand the current state of need for basic items, such as socks and underwear among American youth. The survey was fielded across the U.S. between April 27 – May 1st, 2017. For this survey, 1,020 respondents, (parents/guardians ages 18-65 with at least one child under 18 living at home) from a blend of national consumer panels, participated in an online questionnaire that took approximately 15 minutes to complete. Parents surveyed represented various income levels, races/ethnicities, regions and education levels - among other criteria detailed on the following pages.

Respondents were recruited through a number of different mechanisms, via different sources to join the panels and participate in market research surveys. All panelists have passed a double opt-in process and completed on average 300 profiling data points prior to taking part in surveys. Respondents are invited to take part via email and are provided with a small monetary incentive for doing so.

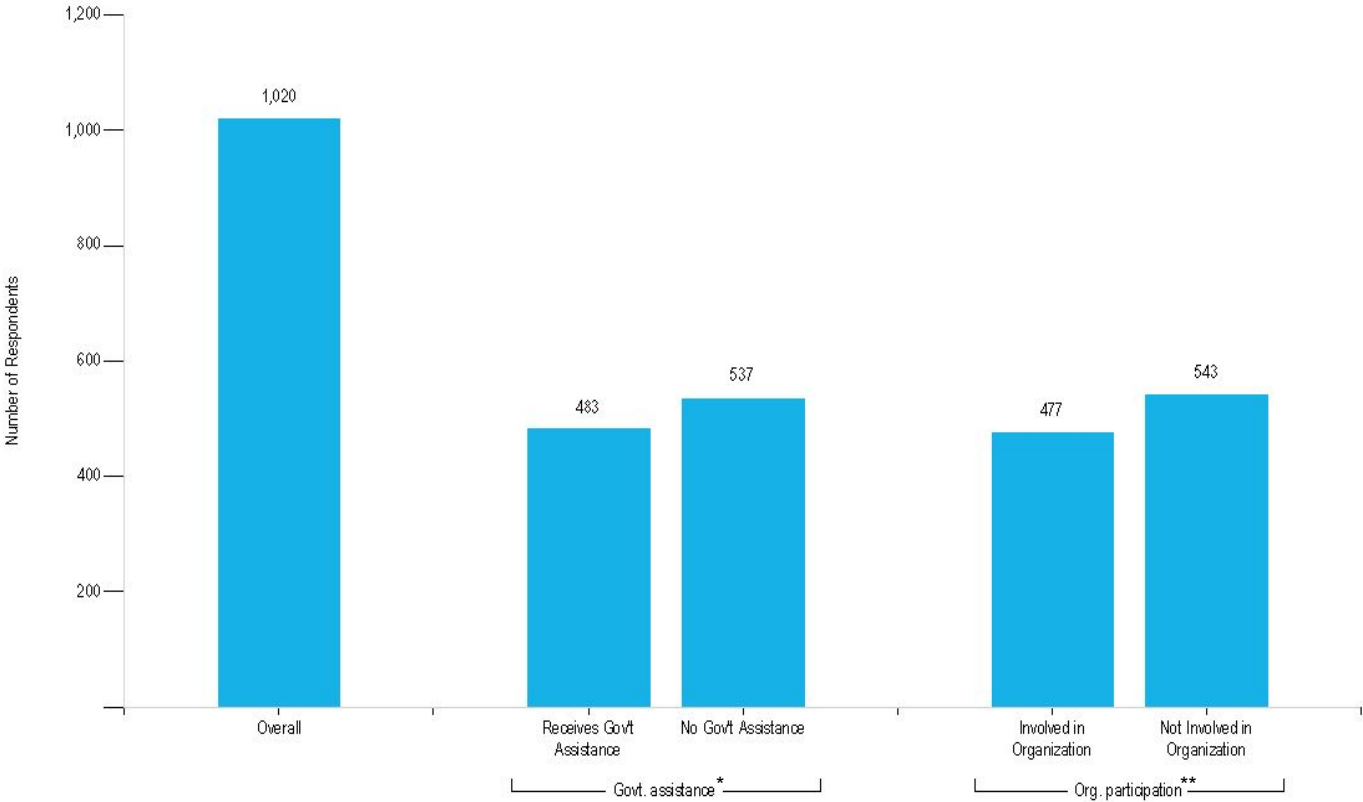
Results of any sample are subject to sampling variation. The magnitude of the variation is measurable and is affected by the number of interviews and the level of the percentages expressing the results. In this particular study, the chances are 95 in 100 that a survey result does not vary, plus or minus, by more than 3.1 % percentage points from the result that would be obtained if interviews had been conducted with all persons in the universe represented by the sample.

In addition to the survey, JCPenney commissioned one-on-one phone interviews with thought leaders and charities in relevant non-profit and educational spaces around the issue of access to basic necessities among low-income families. M Booth conducted these interviews with individuals from the Y, KIDS/Fashion Delivers, Clothes Cabin, Clothes to Kids, Playtime Project, Underwearness, Giving Children Hope and the Salvation Army.

Survey Sample Details



Survey Sample Details



***Govt. Assistance:** Respondents were asked if they or their children were currently participating in or receiving assistance from any of the following programs: SNAP Food Benefits, School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Summer Food Service Program, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, Welfare or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Unemployment Benefits, Special Milk Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program

****Org. Participation:** Respondents were asked if their child(ren) are or have even been involved in the following organizations: Girl or Boy Scouts, Head start, The YMCA, Boys & Girls Club, Big Brother/Big Sister

Survey Results

The survey conclusively showed that a significant portion of low-income Americans worry about their children not having enough socks and underwear, and that many American parents admit their children don't always have sufficient socks and underwear to get through the week.

According to the survey commissioned by JCPenney, for many low-income families that rely on alternate retail outlets such as thrift stores, garage sales, charities, or hand-me-downs from friends and family, socks and underwear tend to be the hardest items to come by. The survey data also underscored that parents report worrying about providing socks and underwear all year-round, with their anxiety peaking during the winter months and in the fall.

Additionally, data revealed that parents believe socks and underwear need to be replenished numerous times throughout the year. For parents struggling to put food on the table, keeping kids in socks and underwear is often impossible. For these families, needing to send children to school without these basic necessities is emotionally devastating for both the parent and child.

Key Findings

OVERALL:

- 40% of low-income parents (with a HHI under 35k) worry about their child having enough socks and underwear.
- More than one third of American parents say they worry about their child having enough socks and underwear.
- Of the parents that reported sending their children to school without socks or underwear, 51% shared they did so because they could not afford to provide their child with enough pairs of socks or underwear to make it through the week.
- Hispanic/Latino respondents report worrying about being able to provide their children with adequate undergarments at highest rates (44%) followed by African American respondents (38%) and Caucasian respondents (31%).
- Lack of education leads to greater struggle to provide basic necessities. Parents without a college degree or higher are much more likely to worry about being able to provide their children with adequate undergarments 40% vs 26% parents with at least a college degree. This indicates how the achievement gap impacts the next generation.
- 50% of those currently receiving state or federal assistance report worrying about being able to provide their children with adequate undergarments vs 20% of those not receiving assistance.
- 7% of low-income parents admit to having sent their children to school without socks or underwear.
- 55% of children who did not have underwear and socks to wear wanted to skip school or refused to go to school because he or she was embarrassed by not having any socks or underwear to wear.
- Having to send children to school without socks or underwear not only affects the child, but it also has a profound emotional impact on the parents. Parents reported feeling worried, stressed, sad, disappointed and insecure as result of having to send their children to school without socks or underwear: 41% worried; 39% stressed; 39% sad; 34% disappointed; 28% insecure.

Key Findings

OVERALL Cont...

- Universally, parents tend to put the needs of their children ahead of their own. This behavior is particularly evident when looking at what parents report prioritizing when money is tight:
 - 41% of parents say they sacrifice purchasing basic necessities like socks and underwear for themselves when money is tight.
 - However, only 9.2% of parents overall say they would hold back on purchasing basic items like socks and underwear for their children (akin to utilities - heat, gas, water, electric - 8%).
 - 11% of low-income parents (making less than 35k) say they would hold back on purchasing basic items like socks and underwear for their children if money was tight. That alone translates to 3,454,000 children whose parents may have to sacrifice basic necessities for their kids.

UNDERWEAR:

- 25% of all parents surveyed report that their children at least sometimes do not have a sufficient supply of underwear.
- low-income families are twice as likely to report that their children never have enough underwear.
- Parents of three or more children are nearly 2x more likely to report their children have not had enough underwear at some point compared to those with just one child.
- 25% of African Americans admit that their child(ren), at one point in time, has not had enough underwear.
- 48% of respondents say kids need new underwear every couple of months.

Key Findings

UNDERWEAR Cont...

- Only 13% of respondents report having ever passed underwear down from one child to another or had children that received underwear secondhand from another child.
- Bras too: 18% of low-income parents (under 35k) report that their daughters at least sometimes lack access to bras.
- Bras are the least common item to be passed down/hand-me-down (8%).
- Bras are the second least common item people report donating to charity (just above underwear) at 19%.
- 46% of parents living in poverty say underwear is among the clothing items that tend to be the hardest to find or get for their child(ren) at second hand stores, garage sales or through friends and family (where 24% of these shoppers often shop). Nearly a fourth of those living in poverty report that bras are hardest to find or get for your child(ren) at second hand stores, garage sales or through friends.
- Among parents who report worrying about their children not having enough underwear, the worry is on their mind year-round, but winter is the time of greatest fear. In fact, 72% worry about children having enough underwear during the winter.

SOCKS:

- Nearly one third of parents surveyed say their children have lacked access to enough socks at some point in time.
- 35% of parents surveyed say their children at least sometimes do not have enough socks.
- 39% of low-income parents (HHI of 35k or less) admit that their children sometimes do not have enough socks.
- 39% of low-income parents (HHI of 35k or less) admit that their children sometimes do not have enough socks.
- 41% of African American parents report that their children at least sometime lack access to socks, compared to 30% of Caucasian respondents and 28% of Hispanic/Latino respondents.

Key Findings

SOCKS Cont...

- Nearly half of those currently receiving federal or state assistance report that their children at least sometimes do not have enough socks.
- 40% of those currently receiving federal or state assistance report that their children lack access to socks.
- 40% of families with three or more children report that their children have not had enough socks at given time - compared to 27% for one child and 30% for families with two children.
- 55% of respondents say their children need new socks at least every couple months.
- Unlike clothing items such as shirts (67%), pants/shorts (66%), coats/jackets (63%), only 29% of respondents report having ever passed socks down from one child to another or had children that received socks secondhand from another child.
- 48% of parents living in poverty say socks is among the clothing items that tend to be the hardest to find or get for their child(ren) at second hand stores, garage sales or through friends and family (where 24% of these shoppers often shop).
- 80% report worrying most about their children having an adequate supply of socks during the winter.

One-on-One Interviews and Quotes

One-on-one interviews underscored the emotional impact not having basic necessities can have on youth and their ability to attend school and thrive. Based on one-on-one interviews, there is an increased need for basic necessities - like socks and underwear - especially during the winter months. Yet, these items are often the least-requested and least likely to be donated, as few people think to donate these sock and underwear to charity and those in need are often too embarrassed to proactively seek out socks and especially underwear.

One-on-One interviews were conducted by M Booth, a global communications company, with the following organizations and individuals:

[Clothes Cabin](#) provides clothing and household linens to people in need

Interviewee: Maxine Becker, Chairman of the Board and President

- a. "Parents often come and request socks because children are refusing to go to school with holes in their shoes and no socks." - Maxine Becker, Chairman of the Board and President
- b. "The lack of basic needs is distracting to kids and they can't learn. Either their pants are too high, there are holes in their shoes, their underwear is pinching, no socks - kids are visibly embarrassed. We sometimes forget about preteens and teens, and for them it's the hardest." - Maxine Becker, Chairman of the Board and President

[Underwearness](#) is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that collects and donates new underwear to children in need.

Interviewee: Koree Kongphand Buckman, Co-founder

- a. "Some people also think underwear is OK to skip, because you can throw on a pair of pants and no one will know. Where's the dignity in that? People might not see it, but all you're thinking about is how you don't have on any underwear. It's distracting. It's crazy how underwear can make someone feel like a whole person." - Koree Kongphand Buckman, Underwearness Founder

One-on-One Interviews and Quotes

[The Y](#) is one of the nation's leading nonprofits strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility.

Interviewee: Pamela Suprenant, Regional Associate Executive Director the Y, Worcester, MA

- a. "Everything is tied together. If you don't have underwear, you have lower self-esteem. You don't participate. The need is obvious here." - Pamela Suprenant, Regional Associate Executive Director the Y, Worcester, MA
- b. "I know if five people ask for new underwear, for example, that really 100 people need them." - Pamela Suprenant, Regional Associate Executive Director the Y, Worcester, MA
- c. "No one asks for socks and underwear. They don't even ask for coats and we're in New England. I don't know if it's shame or embarrassment, but many people just won't ask. Because asking for help is sensitive, we usually offer "free items as part of another activity to help remove the stigma. Like feeding hungry teenagers as part of an Open House basketball game." - Pamela Suprenant, Regional Associate Executive Director the Y, Worcester, MA

Interviewee: Kate Messier, Association Director/Youth Development, Providence, RI

- d. "These kids in need are impacted in lots of ways. Lack of basic items including socks and underwear means they don't have the supplies needed to be in school." - Kate Messier, Association Director / Youth Development, Providence, RI
- e. "The increased demand we see is reflective of the number of people in need that are moving into Rhode Island for a variety of reasons. This means there is an increase shift in the needs that people have- including the very basic necessities." - Kate Messier, Association Director / Youth Development, Providence, RI

One-on-One Interviews and Quotes

[KIDS/Fashion Delivers](#) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that unites retailers, manufacturers, foundations and individuals to support people affected by poverty and tragedy by donating new merchandise.

Interviewee: Merrie Keller, Director of Product Procurement

- a. "Kids are not only using socks for their feet. When it's cold, they have to decide whether to use them as socks or gloves." - Merrie Keller, Director of Product Procurement for K.I.D.S./Fashion Delivers

[Clothes to Kids](#) envisions a community in which every school age child has quality clothing so that he or she may attend school with the confidence and self-esteem needed to achieve academic success. Clothes To Kids of Fairfield County is a year-round program. Clients may shop twice in a 12-month period at the CTKF Store.

Interviewee: Elaine Rubinson, Executive Director

[Playtime Project:](#) Seeks to help create a city that provides every opportunity for children to succeed by advocating for affordable housing, safe shelters, and a strong safety net that helps families bounce back from housing instability.

Interviewee: Melanie Hatter, Communications Coordinator

[Giving Children Hope](#) is a community driven nonprofit that equips frontline partners with resources to serve vulnerable children and families. As a faith-based partner we provide sustainable hope through wellness programs and disaster response in collaboration with local and global communities; we do this through the gathering and giving of Medical Resources, Nutritional Foods, and Basic Needs. Giving Children Hope is a registered 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

Interviewee: SueLynn Yoo, Development Associate

[Salvation Army](#) is an international movement, is an evangelical part of the universal Christian Church. Its message is based on the Bible. Its ministry is motivated by the love of God. Its mission is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet human needs in His name without discrimination.

Interviewee: Sally Haims, Divisional Director of Public Relations at The Salvation Army Golden State Division

Acknowledgements

America's Youth: The Need for Basic Necessities study was commissioned by JCPenney in partnership with the Y. JCPenney is a longtime national partner of the Y.

About JCPenney:

J. C. Penney Company, Inc. (NYSE:JCP), one of the nation's largest apparel and home furnishings retailers, is on a mission to ensure every customer's shopping experience is worth her time, money and effort. Whether shopping jcp.com or visiting one of over 1,000 store locations across the United States and Puerto Rico, she will discover a broad assortment of products from a leading portfolio of private, exclusive and national brands. Supporting this value proposition is the warrior spirit of over 100,000 JCPenney associates worldwide, who are focused on the Company's three strategic priorities of strengthening private brands, becoming a world-class omnichannel retailer and increasing revenue per customer. For additional information, please visit jcp.com.

Our founder James Cash Penney's legacy of giving back to the communities in which we live and work is as relevant today as it was when he opened his first store in 1902. This commitment continues today as we focus on building strong, vibrant communities. We do this by investing our time, money, and effort into causes and charities that provide resources for moms and kids, and through the volunteerism of our passionate and engaged associates across the country. We believe our commitment is worth every penny. For additional information, please visit <http://www.jcpenny.com/community>.

About The Y:

The Y is one of the nation's leading nonprofits strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. Across the U.S., 2,700 Ys engage 22 million men, women and children – regardless of age, income or background – to nurture the potential of children and teens, improve the nation's health and well-being, and provide opportunities to give back and support neighbors. Anchored in more than 10,000 communities, the Y has the long-standing relationships and physical presence not just to promise, but to deliver, lasting personal and social change. Visit ymca.net for more information.