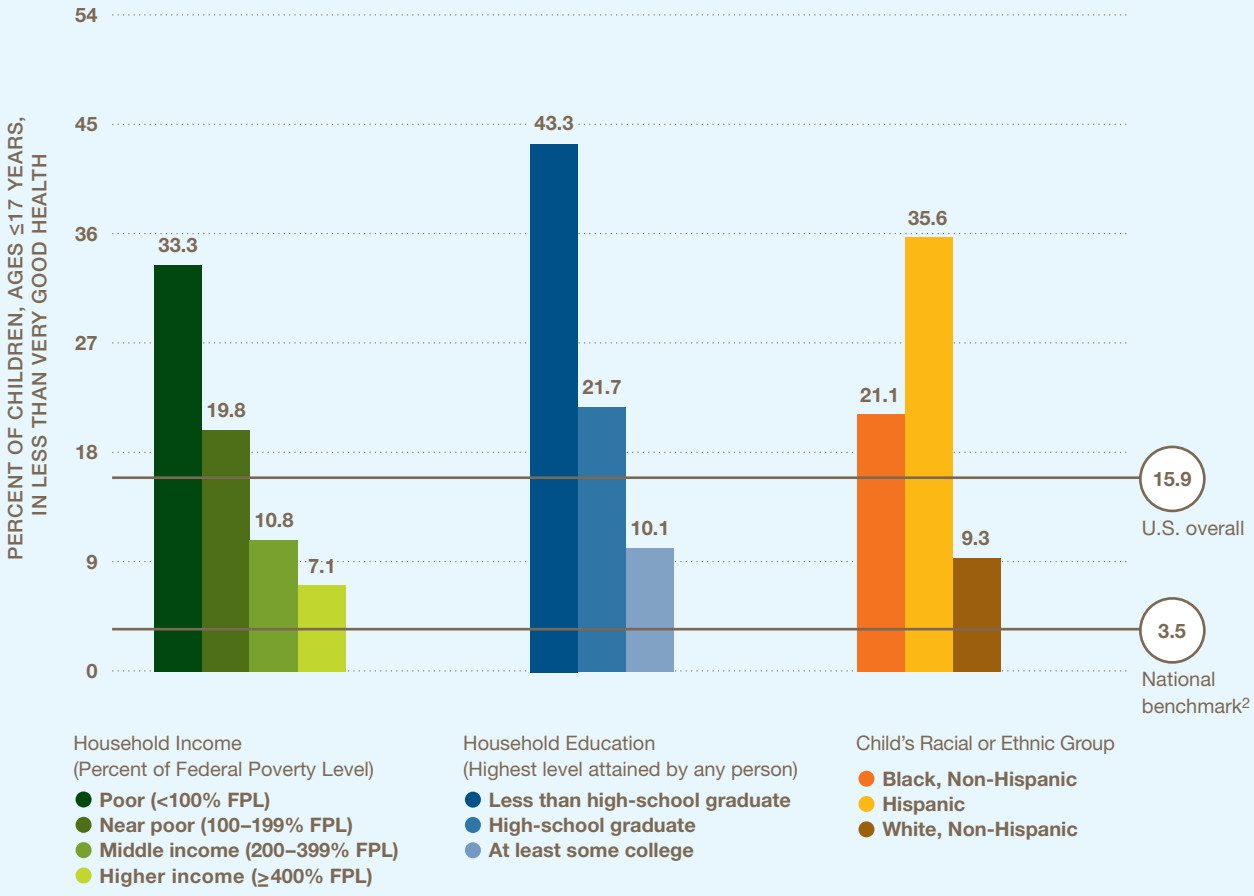
UNITED STATES:

Gaps in Children's General Health Status

In the United States overall, children's general health status[1] varies by family income and education and by racial or ethnic group. Children in the least-advantaged groups typically experience the worst health, but even children in middle-class families are less healthy than those with greater advantages.

- Compared with children in higher-income families, children in poor, near-poor or middle-income families were 4.7, 2.8 and 1.5 times as likely to be in less than optimal health.
- Compared with children living with someone who has completed some college, children in households without a high-school graduate were more than four times as likely—and those in households with a high-school graduate twice as likely—to be in less than optimal health.
- Non-Hispanic white children fare better than those who are non-Hispanic black or Hispanic.

Comparing these rates against the national benchmark[2] for children's general health status reveals unrealized health potential among children across income, education and racial or ethnic groups.



Prepared for the RWJF Commission to Build a Healthier America by the Center on Social Disparities in Health at the University of California, San Francisco.
Source: 2003 National Survey of Children's Health.

1 Based on parental assessment and measured as poor, fair, good, very good or excellent. Health reported as less than very good was considered to be less than optimal.

2 The national benchmark for children's general health status represents the level of health that should be attainable for all children in every state. The benchmark used here—3.5 percent of children with health that was less than optimal, seen in Colorado—is the lowest statistically-reliable rate observed in any state among children whose families were not only higher income but also practiced healthy behaviors (i.e., non-smokers and at least one person who exercised regularly). Rates with relative standard errors of 30 percent or less were considered to be statistically reliable.