

Current US Poverty Statistics

Raising up generations of religious and community leaders committed to building a social movement to end poverty led by the poor



Incomeⁱ

- The federal poverty line is \$11,892 for individuals and \$23,836 for a family of four.
- The official poverty rate is 14.5%, meaning 45.3 million people in the US live in poverty, up by over 8 million since 2008. An additional 97.3 million (33%) of people living in the United States are low-income, defined as incomes below twice the federal poverty line, or \$47,700 for a family of four. Taken together, this means that 48% of the US population is poor or low income, 1 in every 2 people.
- More than 1 in 5 children in America (21.8%) are living under the official poverty line. Half of all children will be on food stamps before they turn 20, including 9 out of 10 African American children.
- A study measuring "economic insecurity" found that 4 out of 5 (79%) of people in the US live in danger of poverty or unemployment at some point in their lifetime (defined as a year or more of periodic joblessness, reliance on government aid such as food stamps or income below 150 percent of the poverty line).
- Only 48% of people could handle a \$400 emergency expense without selling something or borrowing money.

Wealthⁱⁱ

- The top 1% of the US population owns 43% of wealth (\$24.4 trillion); the top 5% of the population owns 72% of wealth (\$40.8 trillion); the bottom 80% of the population owns 7% of wealth (\$3.9 trillion).
- Globally the richest 1% have seen their share of wealth increase from 44% in 2009 to 48% in 2014. If this trend continues, in 2016 they will own more wealth than the other 99% combined. The top 80 people have more wealth than 3.5 billion people (it was 388 people in 2010).

Race and Genderⁱⁱⁱ

- Nearly 1 in 3 Native Americans (29.2%), over 1 in 4 African Americans (27.2%), 1 in 4 Hispanic/Latinos (23.5%), 1 in 10 Asians (10.5%) and 1 in 10 non-Hispanic whites (9.6%) live below the federal poverty line.
- Among foreign born, non-citizens the poverty rate is 22.8%.
- In absolute numbers there are more poor non-Hispanic whites than any other racial or ethnic group, 42% of the poor (18.8 million), although non-Hispanic whites make up 62.6% of the overall population.
- African Americans are incarcerated at a rate more than three times their 13.2% share of the overall population. If current trends continue 1 in 3 black men born in 2001 will go to jail or prison at some point in his lifetime.
- More than half of all children below the poverty line live in families headed by women. Two-thirds of minimum wage earners are women. One in seven women lives below the poverty line.

Employment^{iv}

- 60% of all jobs created between 2008 and 2012 paid the minimum wage. 25% of retail clerks have a college degree.
- For every 4 unemployed people there is 1 job available. 1 in 3 veterans (30.2%) ages 18 to 24 are unemployed.
- Since the 1960s the black unemployment rate has been about 2 to 2.5 times the white unemployment rate. In 2012, the black unemployment rate was 14.0 percent, 2.1 times the white unemployment rate (6.6 percent).
- The minimum wage today—\$7.25—is worth \$2.00 less than in 1968. In 2011, a full-time year-round worker needed to earn \$11.06 an hour to keep a family of four above the federal poverty line.
- Only 25% of lost manufacturing jobs went to workers overseas; most were replaced by new technology.

Health Insurance, Food and Housing^v

- 62.1% of all bankruptcies in 2007 were due to medical debt and three-quarters of them had health insurance
- 1 in 6 (47.5 million) people received food stamps in April 2013, while 30% of food in the US, worth about \$48.3 billion, is wasted each year.
- 51% of pre-k through 12th grade public school students last year were eligible for free or reduced-price lunches.
- 11 million or 23% of all residential mortgages are in a condition of negative equity, meaning they owe more on their mortgage than their property is worth. In Ferguson, MO the rate is 51%.
- The home foreclosure rate in 2009 was over 10,000 per day.
- A record 14 million (1 in 9) US homes are vacant, yet 3.5 million people experience homelessness each year and 39% of them are children.

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- ⁱ All measures are current from the most recent census unless otherwise noted. “Preliminary Estimate of Weighted Average Poverty Thresholds for 2013”, US Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/data/threshld/>, and <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/00000.html>; “Census Shows 1 in 2 Americans Poor or Low Income”, USA Today, <http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/nation/story/2011-12-15/poor-census-low-income/51944034/1>; Tanner, Lindsey. Food Stamps Will Feed Half Of US Kids, Study Says. Associated Press, 11/2/09; 1. “AP: 4 in 5 Americans Live in Danger of Falling into Poverty, Joblessness,” NBC News, 7/28/13, http://usnews.nbcnews.com/_news/2013/07/28/19738595-ap-4-in-5-americans-live-in-danger-of-falling-into-poverty-joblessness; US Federal Reserve “Report on the Economic Well-Being of U.S. Households in 2013” 7/2014. <http://www.federalreserve.gov/econresdata/2013-report-economic-well-being-us-households-201407.pdf>.
- ⁱⁱ Donhoff, G. William, “Wealth, Income, and Power”. 1/2011. Accessed at www.commonblog.com/2011/03/21/wealth-income-and-power; Slater, John, “Richest 1% will own more than all the rest by 2016”. 1/2015. Accessed at <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/blogs/2015/01/richest-1-per-cent-will-own-more-than-all-the-rest-by-2016>.
- ⁱⁱⁱ “Preliminary Estimate of Weighted Average Poverty Thresholds for 2013”, US Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/data/threshld/>, and <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/00000.html>; “National Snapshot”, National Women’s Law Center, 9/13, <http://www.nwlc.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/povertysnapshot2012.pdf>; “8 facts: US Incarceration”, The Globalist, 8/14, <http://www.theglobalist.com/u-s-incarceration-still-a-very-unequal-nation/>
- ^{iv} “Veteran Poverty by the Numbers”, Kevin Hawryluk and Abigail Ridley-Kerr, 3/6/12, <http://americanprogress.org/issues/military/news/2012/03/06/11201/veteran-poverty-by-the-numbers/>; David Van Arsdale, “The Temporary Work Revolution: The Shift from Jobs That Solve Poverty to Jobs That Make Poverty,” WorkingUSA, 3/13; Peter Brown, “The Digital Disruption - Technology & Economics for the 99%”, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJnF8URsFus>; “The Unfinished March: An Overview.” Economic Policy Institute, <http://www.epi.org>.
- ^v David U. Himmelstein et al., “Medical Bankruptcy in the United States, 2007: Results of a National Study,” The American Journal of Medicine 122, no. 8 (August 2009): 741–746, doi:10.1016/j.amjmed.2009.04.012; Phil Izzo, “Nearly 1 in 6 Americans Receives Food Stamps,” WSJ Blogs, 7/8/13, <http://blogs.wsj.com/economics/2013/07/08/nearly-1-in-6-americans-receive-food-stamps>; www.livescience.com/2520-staggering-amount-food-wasted.html; “Half of public school students in poverty”, Washington Post, 1/16/15; Foreclosures Grind On, New York Times, August 19, 2010; U.S. Foreclosure Filings Jump 23% to Record in Third, Bloomberg, October 15, 2009; New CoreLogic Data Shows Second Consecutive Quarterly Decline in Negative Equity, AOL DailyFinance, 08/26/10; No one home: 1 in 9 housing units vacant, USA Today, 2/13/09; 1. “How Many People Experience Homelessness?,” National Coalition for the Homeless, July 2009, http://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/How_Many.html; “Over Half of Ferguson Homeowners have Negative Equity”, Dennis Norman, 10/23/14, <http://stlouisrealestatenews.com/st-louis-real-estate-market/half-ferguson-homeowners-negative-equity/>