

# 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*



## Income<sup>i</sup>

- 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.

## Wealth<sup>ii</sup>

- In 2010 the top 1% of the US population owned 42.1% of financial (non-home) wealth; the next 4% owned 30% of financial wealth; the next 15% owned 23.5% of financial wealth (totaling 95.6% for the top 20% combined); the bottom 80% of the population owned 4.7% of financial wealth.
- Globally the richest 1% saw their share of wealth increase from 44% in 2009 to 48% in 2014. If this trend continues they will control more wealth than the other 99% combined in 2017. In 2016 the richest 8 people controlled more wealth than 3.6 billion people. (It was 388 people in 2010 and 80 people in 2014.)

## Race, Ethnicity and Gender<sup>iii</sup>

- 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.
- 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.
- Among foreign born, non-citizens the poverty rate is 22.8%.
- Two-thirds of minimum wage earners are women. One in seven women lives below the poverty line. More than half of all children below the poverty line live in families headed by women.

## Employment<sup>iv</sup>

- 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.
- 85% of the 5.6 million US manufacturing jobs lost between 2000 and 2010 were attributable to technological change rather than international trade. Human welders make an average of \$25/hr; a robot welder costs \$8/hr.

## Health Insurance, Food and Housing<sup>v</sup>

- 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 12<sup>th</sup> 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.

- 
- <sup>i</sup> 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](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>.
- <sup>ii</sup> Donhoff, G. William, “Wealth, Income, and Power” 1/2011. Accessed at <http://www2.ucsc.edu/whorulesamerica/power/wealth.html>; Elliott, Larry, “World’s Eight Richest People Have Same Wealth as Poorest 50%,” 1/15/2017. Accessed at [https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/jan/16/worlds-eight-richest-people-have-same-wealth-as-poorest-50?CMP=tw\\_t\\_a-world\\_b-gdnworld](https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/jan/16/worlds-eight-richest-people-have-same-wealth-as-poorest-50?CMP=tw_t_a-world_b-gdnworld).
- <sup>iii</sup> “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/>
- <sup>iv</sup> “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; “The Unfinished March: An Overview.” Economic Policy Institute, <http://www.epi.org>; Federica Cocco, “Most US Manufacturing Jobs Lost to Technology, Not Trade,” Financial Times, 12/2/2016, <https://www.ft.com/content/dec677c0-b7e6-11e6-ba85-95d1533d9a62>.
- <sup>v</sup> 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 Receive 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](http://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](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/>