

Poverty, Income, and Health Insurance in the United States

September 2009

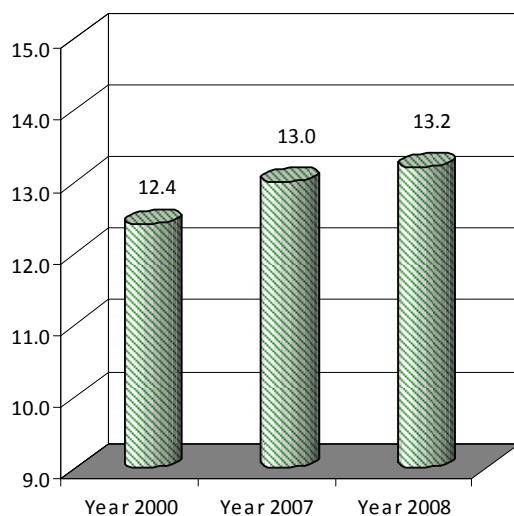
rev 9.28

Recessions have a disproportionate impact on lower-income families because they cause rising unemployment, a reduction in work hours, and the stagnation of family incomes—all of which have the greatest impact on those with the least income. The data in this fact sheet reflect the year 2008 and so begin to capture the first effects of the recession on low-income families. However, the economic downturn has greatly accelerated since 2008, making it very likely that these figures underestimate the true deterioration of incomes and increases in poverty currently impacting families.

Poverty and Child Poverty

In the United States, 39,108,422 people live below the poverty line, a poverty rate of 13.2%. The poverty rate change in the United States from 2007 to 2008 is statistically significant, and the change from 2000 to 2008 also is statistically significant.

Poverty Rates in the United States

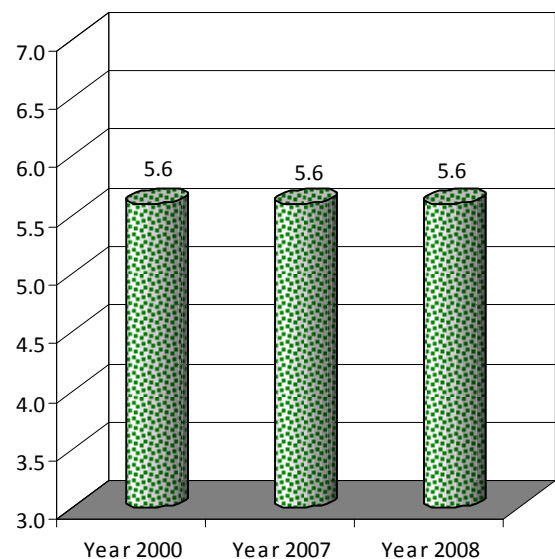


Children are particularly vulnerable to poverty. 12,919,224 children live below the poverty line in the United States, a child poverty rate of 17.8%. The child poverty rate in 2007 was 17.6%, and in 2000 it was 16.1%. The change from 2007 to 2008 is not statistically significant, and the change from 2000 to 2008 is statistically significant.

Extreme Poverty

Extreme poverty, living on an annual income of less than half the poverty line (below \$10,600 for a family of four), affects 16,634,799 people in the United States, an extreme poverty rate of 5.6%. The extreme poverty rate has not changed from its 2007 or 2000 levels. Those living in extreme poverty are often in unsafe living conditions and struggle to meet the most basic of their needs.

Extreme Poverty Rates in the United States



Asset Poverty

Twenty-three percent of families in the United States are asset poor, meaning they do not have enough saved to subsist at the poverty level for even 3 months if their income suddenly dried up. Without this cushion to fall back on in tough times, job loss, reduction in hours, loss of benefits, or “crises” like a car breaking down, can catapult families into poverty and hardship. (CFED 2009-2010 Assets and Opportunity Scorecard. Visit <http://cfed.org/> for more information.)

Health Insurance Coverage

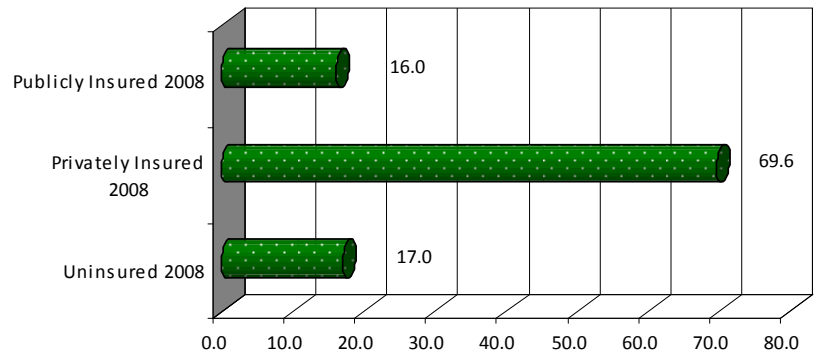
In the United States, 44,554,848 people do not have health insurance. This translates into 17.0% of the population being uninsured.

Of those with coverage in the United States, 69.6% are covered by private insurance, and 16.0% are covered by public insurance. (civilian, non-institutionalized population; sum of uninsured, privately insured, and publicly insured percents do not add up to 100 because certain populations have both public and private coverage.)

Median Household Income

The median household income in the United States is \$52,029, meaning half of households in the United States have incomes higher and half lower than this amount. Since 2007, median household income has declined \$661, a change that is statistically significant. Since 2000, median household income has declined \$2,235, a change that also is statistically significant. (when adjusted for inflation)

Health Insurance Coverage Status in the United States, 2008



Measuring Hardship and Establishing What Families Need to Get By

The Federal Poverty Measure

Official poverty data are based on the federal poverty guidelines, which were developed in the 1960s. The measure is not geographically specific and does not reflect what it takes for families to make ends meet.

2008 Federal Poverty Guidelines	
Family Size	Poverty Guideline
1	\$10,400
2	\$14,000
3	\$17,600
4	\$21,200

Making Ends Meet

Efforts targeted at helping families escape poverty or as measured by the federal poverty measure are vitally important. However, it is abundantly clear that just because someone is not officially poor does not mean they have a standard of living that allows them to fully participate in American life. Experts agree that it usually takes around twice the poverty line for families to make ends meet.

Data Source Explanation:

Unless otherwise noted, all data are derived from the U.S. Census Bureau’s *American Community Survey* and from the *2000 Decennial Census*. The *American Community Survey* recently released estimates on 2008 income, poverty, and health insurance coverage, which are the most current data available for geographies with populations over 65,000. For more information on the *American Community Survey*, visit www.census.gov/acs/www/.

For further analysis and comments on poverty trends, implications, and solutions, contact us:

Social IMPACT Research Center

a program of Heartland Alliance
33 W. Grand Avenue, Suite 500
Chicago, IL 60654

312.870.4949 | research@heartlandalliance.org

