



ENDING POVERTY

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POSITIVE ECONOMIC REPORT MASKS PERSISTENT HARDSHIP, INEQUITIES, AND RISING INCOME INEQUALITY IN ILLINOIS

CHICAGO, IL, September 15, 2016 – New data from the U.S. Census Bureau revealed today that poverty in Illinois decreased from 2014 to 2015, following national trends. Despite this heartening improvement, however, poverty in Illinois remains stubbornly high – 13.6% compared to 11.9% in 2007 before the recession. Moreover, the new data show a number of trends moving in the wrong direction: Illinois is one of only 8 states in which income inequality grew, and wide racial disparities persist on nearly every measure.

“While we are pleased to see the poverty rate generally moving in the right direction, we can’t lose sight of the fact that a staggering number of Illinoisans are still struggling every day to meet their most basic needs,” said Amy Terpstra, Director of Research at Heartland Alliance. “Over 1.7 million Illinoisans are living in poverty, and about 785,000 of them are living in extreme poverty, which for a family of four means living on less than about \$12,000 per year.”

The United States has been in economic recovery for a number of years now, but meaningful improvements for Illinois and the nation have been slow to reach those who need it most.

“The lesson is that our lowest income residents are the first to be impacted by an economic crisis, they experience the most hardship, and they are the last to experience any recovery,” said Sam Tuttle, Director of Policy at Heartland Alliance. “This is precisely why we need to invest in programs and policies that address poverty and inequity: so that regardless of the economic climate, more individuals are able to build and maintain stable lives.”

Illinois has entered its second year without a state budget, and the burden of this falls on the backs of the millions of Illinoisans in poverty. The resulting erosion of services that help connect people to work, ensure low-income workers can access child care, provide MAP grants for students seeking an education, and help survivors of violence recover will make it much more difficult for people to meet their basic needs and move out of poverty.

Today’s release revealed:

- Illinois poverty declined from 2014 to 2015 and is now at 13.6%. The poverty rate is still 1.7 percentage points above its pre-recession 2007 level of 11.9%.
- Extreme poverty—having income below half the poverty line—also declined in Illinois and is now at 6.2%. 785,000 Illinoisans are extremely poor.

- Illinois median household income increased to \$59,588 in 2015. Income is still 4% below its 2007 level.
- The rate of non-seniors in Illinois who are uninsured fell to 8.1%, a 3 percentage point decline from 2014 and a dramatic decline of 6.1 percentage points from 2008.
- Illinois is one of only 8 states where income inequality worsened from 2014 to 2015. Illinois is one of the most unequal states in the nation.
- While white Illinois households experienced an increase in median household income from 2014 to 2015, black and Latino households in Illinois did not see any increase.
- People of color are disproportionately impacted by poverty: 8.7% of white, non-Latino Illinoisans are poor compared to 28.2% of black Illinoisans and 19.4% of Latino Illinoisans.

“The increase in income inequality and the persistence of racial disparities in 2015 tell us that Illinois is leaving low-income families and communities of color behind,” said Tuttle. “We should be making targeted efforts to dismantle the policies and practices that perpetuate racial inequity and income inequality – not cutting the programs that help address these disparities as has been Illinois’ approach as of late.”

[Read the fact sheet](#) on Illinois and Chicago region poverty, income, and health insurance trends based on the newly released data.

[Download data books](#) for Chicago Community Areas and for all cities and townships in the 6-county Chicago metropolitan region.

[Access the Census Bureau’s local demographic, social, economic, and housing data](#) that were released today for places with populations of 65,000 or more. Contact Heartland Alliance for assistance accessing and interpreting the data.

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Heartland Alliance for Human Rights & Human Needs – Heartland Alliance, one of the world’s leading anti-poverty organizations, works in communities in the U.S. and abroad to serve those who are homeless, living in poverty, or seeking safety. It provides a comprehensive array of services in the areas of health, housing, jobs, and justice – and leads state and national policy efforts, which target lasting change for individuals and society. For more information visit, www.heartlandalliance.org or follow us on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/heartlandhelps> or like us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/heartlandalliance>.

Heartland Alliance Research & Policy - Heartland Alliance’s Research & Policy Division focuses on the realization of human rights through ending poverty, racism, and injustice by engaging in research on social issues and solutions, policy and systems change, and field building nationwide. Learn more [at https://www.heartlandalliance.org/get-informed/research-policy-landing](https://www.heartlandalliance.org/get-informed/research-policy-landing).

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Illinois and Chicago Region



POVERTY, INCOME, AND HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE

The U.S. poverty rate was 13.5% in 2015, representing 43.1 million people living in poverty. This is a significant decline from 2014, and is, in fact, the largest decline in 16 years. Nonetheless, the poverty rate still remains higher than the pre-recession level of 12.5% in 2007. In Illinois, 1.7 million people were in poverty in 2015 — a rate of 13.6% — and 2.1 million Illinoisans are near poor and economically insecure with incomes between 100%–199% of the federal poverty threshold.

In Illinois's second year without a state budget, the burden falls on the backs of the millions of Illinoisans in poverty. The resulting erosion of services that help connect people to work, ensure low-income workers can access child care, provide MAP grants for students seeking an education, and help survivors of violence recover will make it much more difficult for people to move out of poverty.

Illinois

	2007		2014		2015	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Poverty	1,496,248	11.9	1,804,535*	14.4*	1,703,258*	13.6*
Extreme Poverty	667,578	5.3	829,130*	6.6*	784,584*	6.2*
Low Income/Near Poor	2,029,262	16.2	2,156,083*	17.2*	2,095,725*	16.7*
Related Child Poverty	511,142	16.3	582,212*	19.9*	548,174*	18.9*
No Health Insurance [†]	1,597,086	14.2	1,218,548*	11.1*	885,459*	8.1*
Median Household Income [^]	\$61,871	--	\$57,516*	--	\$59,588*	--

* Denotes change from prior year in table is statistically significant. [†] Health insurance coverage estimates reflect 2008—the first year they were collected—rather than 2007. Estimates are for the population under age 65. [^] All income figures are in 2015 dollars.

Chicago

	2007		2014		2015	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Poverty	550,580	20.5	586,719*	22.0*	556,134*	20.9
Extreme Poverty	244,498	9.1	274,122*	10.3*	252,392*	9.5*
Low Income/Near Poor	554,636	20.6	568,241	21.3	556,736	20.9
Related Child Poverty	201,748	30.6	195,154	33.3*	178,946*	31.2
No Health Insurance [†]	526,082	21.6	379,827*	15.9*	278,843*	11.7*
Median Household Income [^]	\$52,018	--	\$48,795*	--	\$50,702*	--

* Denotes change from prior year in table is statistically significant. [†] Health insurance coverage estimates reflect 2008—the first year they were collected—rather than 2007. Estimates are for the population under age 65. [^] All income figures are in 2015 dollars.

6-County Chicago Region

	2007		2014		2015	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Poverty	936,259	11.3	1,144,044*	13.8*	1,098,665*	13.3
Extreme Poverty	416,119	5.0	514,643*	6.2*	493,866	6.0
Low Income/Near Poor	1,277,860	15.4	1,393,032*	16.9*	1,345,347	16.3
Related Child Poverty	339,216	15.8	386,474*	19.8*	364,717	18.8
No Health Insurance [†]	1,151,068	15.4	902,050*	12.4*	677,327*	9.3*
Median Household Income [^]	--	--	--	--	--	--

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Suburban 6-County Region (no Chicago)

	2007		2014		2015	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Poverty	385,679	6.9	557,325*	10.0*	542,531	9.7
Extreme Poverty	171,621	3.1	240,521*	4.3*	241,474	4.3
Low Income/Near Poor	723,224	12.9	824,791*	14.7*	788,611	14.1
Related Child Poverty	137,468	9.2	191,320*	14.0*	185,771	13.6
No Health Insurance [†]	624,986	12.4	522,223*	10.7*	398,484*	8.2*
Median Household Income [^]	--	--	--	--	--	--





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Measuring Poverty

Official poverty data are based on the federal poverty thresholds, which are used to determine poverty status. The measure is not geographically specific and does not reflect what it takes for families to make ends meet.

Far more people struggle to make ends meet than the official poverty data suggest. The Illinois Basic Economic Security Tables™ (BEST™) show that it takes a family of 3 (adult, preschooler, school-age child) over \$70,000 to be economically secure in Illinois.

2015 FEDERAL POVERTY THRESHOLDS

Family Size	Extreme Poverty (0-49% FPL)	Poverty (0-99% FPL)	Low Income (100-199% FPL)
	\$6,043	\$12,085	\$24,170
	\$7,699	\$15,397	\$30,794
	\$9,436	\$18,872	\$37,744
	\$12,130	\$24,259	\$48,518

National data come from the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. All sub-national data are derived from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey 1-year estimates program. The most recent American Community Survey estimates reflect 2015 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/.

Statistical significance refers to the probability that the observed changes are "true" rather than the result of an error in sampling or estimation. Data included here are statistically significant at the 90th percentile.

For more information on the Illinois Basic Economic Security Tables™, visit <http://www.heartlandalliance.org/research/illinois-cost-of-living/>.

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