



Income, Insurance, and Poverty

The U.S. Census Bureau announced that real median household income increased by 5.2 percent between 2014 and 2015 while the official poverty rate decreased 1.2 percentage points. At the same time, the percentage of people without health insurance coverage decreased.

Median household income in the United States in 2015 was \$56,516, an increase in real terms of 5.2 percent from the 2014 median income of \$53,718. This is the first annual increase in median household income since 2007, the year before the most recent recession.

The nation's official poverty rate in 2015 was 13.5 percent, with 43.1 million people in poverty, 3.5 million fewer than in 2014. The 1.2 percentage point decrease in the poverty rate from 2014 to 2015 represents the largest annual percentage point drop in poverty since 1999.

The percentage of people without health insurance coverage for the entire 2015 calendar year was 9.1 percent, down from 10.4 percent in 2014. The number of people without health insurance declined to 29.0 million from 33.0 million over the period.

These findings are contained in two reports: [*Income and Poverty in the United States: 2015*](#) and [*Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2015*](#). The Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement was conducted nationwide and collected information about income and health insurance coverage during the 2015 calendar year. The Current Population Survey, sponsored jointly by the U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, is conducted every month and is the primary source of labor force statistics for the U.S. population; it is used to calculate the monthly unemployment rate estimates. Supplements are added in most months; the Annual Social and Economic Supplement questionnaire is designed to give annual, national estimates of income, poverty and health insurance numbers and rates.

Another Census Bureau report, [*The Supplemental Poverty Measure: 2015*](#), was also released today. With support from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, it describes research showing a different way of measuring poverty in the United States and includes estimates for numerous demographic groups, including state-level estimates. The supplemental poverty measure serves as an additional indicator of economic well-being and provides a deeper understanding of economic conditions. The Census Bureau has published poverty estimates using this supplemental measure annually since 2011. Since September 2015, the supplemental poverty measure has been released the same day as the official poverty estimates.

The Current Population Survey-based income and poverty report includes comparisons with the previous year and to 2007 (before the last recession); historical tables in the report contain statistics back to 1959. The health insurance report is based on both the Current Population Survey and the American Community Survey and includes comparisons with the previous year. State and local income and poverty estimates, as well as local health insurance coverage estimates, will be released Thursday, Sept. 15, from the American Community Survey.

Income

- Real median incomes in 2015 for family households (\$72,165) and nonfamily households (\$33,805) increased 5.3 percent and 5.4 percent, respectively, from their 2014 medians. This is the first annual increase in median household income for family households since 2007. The most recent increase for nonfamily households was in 2009. The increases of 5.3 percent and 5.4 percent for family and nonfamily households were not statistically different.
- Real median household income in 2015 was 1.6 percent lower than in 2007, the year before the most recent recession, and 2.4 percent lower than the median household income peak that occurred in 1999. The difference between the 1.6 percent change and the 2.4 percent change was not statistically significant.

Race and Hispanic Origin

(Race data refer to people reporting a single race only; Hispanics can be of any race.)

- The real median income of Hispanic households increased by 6.1 percent between 2014 and 2015. Non-Hispanic white and black households also saw increases of 4.4 percent and 4.1 percent, respectively. While Asian households had the highest median income in 2015, the percentage change in their real median income was not statistically significant between 2014 and 2015. The differences between the 2014 to 2015 percentage changes in median income for non-Hispanic white, black and Hispanic households were not statistically different. (See [Table 1 in the report](#).)

Regions

- Households in all regions experienced an increase in real median income between 2014 and 2015. Median household income increased 6.4 percent in the West, 5.1 percent in the Midwest, 4.9 percent in the Northeast and 2.9 percent in the South. The differences between the 2014 to 2015 percentage changes in median household income for all regions when compared to each other, except for the difference between the South and the West, were not statistically significant. (See [Table 1 in the report](#).)
- Households with the highest median income were in the Northeast (\$62,182) and the West (\$61,442), followed by the Midwest (\$57,082) and the South (\$51,174). The difference between the median household incomes for the Northeast and West were not statistically significant. (See [Table 1 in the report](#).)

Earnings

- The 2015 real median earnings of men and women who worked full time, year-round between 2014 and 2015 increased 1.5 percent and 2.7 percent, respectively. This is the first significant annual increase in median earnings for men and women since 2009. The difference between the 1.5 percent change and 2.7 percent change was not statistically significant.
- In 2015, the median earnings of women who worked full time, year-round (\$40,742) was 80.0 percent of that for men working full time, year-round (\$51,212) — not statistically different from the 2014 ratio. The female-to-male earnings ratio has not shown a statistically significant annual increase since 2007.
- The number of men and women working full time, year-round increased by 1.4 million and 1.0 million, respectively, between 2014 and 2015. An estimated 73.9 percent of working men with earnings and 61.3 percent of working women with earnings worked full time, year-round in 2015, not statistically different from 2014. The difference between the 2014 to 2015 increases in the number of men and women full time, year-round workers was not statistically significant.

Income Inequality

- The Gini index was 0.479 in 2015; the change from 2014 was not statistically significant. Since 1993, the earliest year available for comparable measures of income inequality, the Gini index has increased 5.5 percent. (Developed more than a century ago, the Gini index is the most common measure of household income inequality used by economists, with 0.0 representing total income equality and 1.0 equivalent to total inequality.)
- Changes in income inequality between 2014 and 2015 were not statistically significant as measured by the shares of aggregate household income by quintiles.

Poverty

- The poverty rate for families and the number of families in poverty were 10.4 percent and 8.6 million in 2015, a decrease from 11.6 percent and 9.5 million families in 2014.
- In 2015, 5.4 percent of married-couple families, 28.2 percent of families with a female householder, and 14.9 percent of families with a male householder lived in poverty. For married-couple families and families with a female householder, both the poverty rate and the number in poverty decreased. For families with a male householder, neither the poverty rates nor the number in poverty showed any statistically significant change between 2014 and 2015.

Thresholds

- As defined by the Office of Management and Budget and updated for inflation using the Consumer Price Index, the weighted average poverty threshold for a family of four in 2015 was \$24,257.
(See <www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/historical-poverty-thresholds.html> for the complete set of dollar value thresholds that vary by family size and composition.)

Sex

- In 2015, 12.2 percent of males were in poverty, down from 13.4 percent in 2014. About 14.8 percent of females were in poverty in 2015, down from 16.1 percent in 2014. (See [Table 3 in the report](#).)
- Gender differences in poverty rates were more pronounced for those ages 18 to 64. The poverty rate for women ages 18 to 64 was 14.2 percent while the poverty rate for men ages 18 to 64 was 10.5 percent. The poverty rate for women age 65 and older was 10.3 percent while the poverty rate for men age 65 and older was 7.0 percent.

Race and Hispanic Origin

(Race data refer to people reporting a single race only; Hispanics can be of any race.)

- In 2015, 9.1 percent of non-Hispanic whites were in poverty, down from 10.1 percent in 2014. The number in poverty decreased to 17.8 million, down from 19.7 million. Non-Hispanic whites accounted for 61.4 percent of the total population and 41.2 percent of people in poverty.
- Both the rate and number of Hispanics in poverty in 2015 decreased to 21.4 percent and 12.1 million from 23.6 percent and 13.1 million in 2014.
- Both the rate and number of blacks in poverty in 2015 decreased to 24.1 percent and 10.0 million from 26.2 percent and 10.8 million in 2014.
- Asians did not experience a statistically significant change in their poverty rates nor in the number of people in poverty between 2014 and 2015.
- [Table 3 in the report](#) details 2015 poverty rates and numbers in poverty, as well as changes since 2014 in these measures, across race groups and Hispanic origin.

Regions

- In 2015, the poverty rate and the number in poverty decreased in the South, West and Midwest to 15.3 percent, 13.3 percent and 11.7 percent, respectively. The Northeast did not experience a significant change in the poverty rate or the number in poverty between 2014 and 2015. (See [Table 3 in the report](#).)

Shared Households

Shared households are defined as households that include at least one “additional” adult: a person age 18 or older who is not enrolled in school and is not the householder, spouse or cohabiting partner of the householder. The information on shared households covers adults living in the household in 2016 at the time of the survey. Therefore, the following two paragraphs compare 2015 to 2016.

- Between 2015 and 2016, changes in the number and percentage of shared households were not statistically significant. In 2016, there were 24.1 million shared households, representing 19.1 percent of all households. In 2007, prior to the recession, there were 19.7 million shared households, representing 17.0 percent of all households.
- In 2016, 7.0 million young adults ages 25 to 34 (16.0 percent) lived with their parents, an increase from 6.5 million (15.1 percent) in 2015.

Supplemental Poverty Measure

The supplemental poverty measure extends the official poverty measure for numerous demographic groups, including state-level estimates, by taking into account many of the government programs designed to assist low-income families and individuals that are not included in the current official poverty measure. While the nation's official poverty rate, presented in the [*Income and Poverty in the United States: 2015*](#) report, was 13.5 percent in 2015, the universe for the supplemental poverty measure is different because it includes children younger than age 15 who are not related to anyone in the household, such as foster children. Therefore, the official poverty rate presented in the [*Supplemental Poverty Measure: 2015*](#) report was 13.7 percent.

The supplemental poverty measure released today also shows:

- The supplemental poverty rate in 2015 was 14.3 percent, compared to last year's rate of 15.3 percent.
- There were 45.7 million people in poverty in 2015 using the supplemental measure, higher than the 43.5 million using the official poverty definition with the supplemental poverty measure universe.
- The poverty rate declined for many groups and no major group experienced a statistically significant increase.
- When tax credits and noncash benefits results are included, this results in lower poverty rates for some groups. For instance, the supplemental poverty rate was lower for children than the official rate: 16.1 percent compared with 20.1 percent.

While the official poverty measure includes only pretax money income, the supplemental measure adds the value of in-kind benefits, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, school lunches, housing assistance and refundable tax credits. Additionally, the supplemental poverty measure deducts necessary expenses for critical goods and services from income. Expenses that are deducted include taxes, child care, commuting expenses, out-of-pocket medical expenses and child support paid to another household. The supplemental poverty measure permits the examination of the effects of government transfers on poverty estimates. For example, not including refundable tax credits (the Earned Income Tax Credit and the refundable portion of the child tax credit) in resources, the poverty rate for all people would have been 17.2 percent rather than 14.3 percent.

The supplemental measure does not replace the official poverty measure and will not be used to determine eligibility for government programs.

Health Insurance Coverage

- The Current Population Survey shows that the percentage of people with health insurance coverage for all or part of 2015 was 90.9 percent, higher than the rate in 2014 (89.6 percent).
- The uninsured rate decreased between 2014 and 2015 by 1.3 percentage points. In 2015, the percentage of people without health insurance coverage for the entire calendar year was 9.1 percent, or 29.0 million, lower than the rate and number of uninsured in 2014 (10.4 percent or 33.0 million). See [*Figure 1 in the report*](#) and [*Table 1 in the report*](#). Over time, changes in the rate of health insurance coverage and the distribution of coverage types may reflect economic trends, shifts

in the demographic composition of the population, and policy changes that impact access to health care. Several such policy changes occurred in 2014, when many provisions of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act went into effect.

- Between 2014 and 2015, the increase in the percentage of the population covered by health insurance was due to an increase in the rates of both private and government coverage. The rate of private coverage increased by 1.2 percentage points to 67.2 percent in 2015, and the government coverage rate increased by 0.6 percentage points to 37.1 percent.
- Of the subtypes of health insurance, employment-based insurance covered the most people (55.7 percent of the population), followed by Medicaid (19.6 percent), Medicare (16.3 percent), direct-purchase (16.3 percent) and military health care (4.7 percent).
- Between 2014 and 2015, the greatest change in coverage was the change in direct-purchase health insurance, which increased by 1.7 percentage points to cover 16.3 percent of people for some or all of 2015 (up from 14.6 percent in 2014).
- In 2015, the uninsured rate for children younger than age 19 was 5.3 percent, down from 6.2 percent in 2014.
- In 2015, the uninsured rate for children younger than age 19 in poverty (7.5 percent) was higher than the uninsured rate for children not in poverty (4.8 percent).

Age

- For the second year in a row, the percentage of people without health insurance coverage dropped for every single year of age under 65, according to the American Community Survey.

Race and Hispanic Origin

(Race data refer to people reporting a single race only; Hispanics can be of any race.)

- Between 2014 and 2015, the overall rate of health insurance coverage increased for most race and Hispanic origin groups. Hispanics had the largest increase (3.6 percentage points), followed by Asians (1.9 percentage points) and non-Hispanic whites (0.9 percentage points).
- In 2015, non-Hispanic whites had the lowest uninsured rate among race and Hispanic origin groups, at 6.7 percent. The uninsured rates for blacks and Asians were higher than for non-Hispanic whites, at 11.1 percent and 7.5 percent, respectively. Hispanics had the highest uninsured rate in 2015, at 16.2 percent.

States

- According to the American Community Survey, during 2015, the state with the lowest percentage of people without health insurance at the time of the interview was Massachusetts (2.8 percent), while the highest uninsured rate was for Texas (17.1 percent).
- The American Community Survey also showed that between 2014 and 2015, the uninsured rate decreased in 47 states and the District of Columbia. The declines for the states ranged from 0.5 percentage points (Massachusetts) to 3.9 percentage

points (California). Three states (North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming) did not experience a statistically significant change in their uninsured rate.