



Poverty deepened in West Virginia in 2011

Posted: Sep 20, 2012 1:15 PM EDT

Updated: Sep 20, 2012 1:28 PM EDT

By Pam Kasey - [email](#)

Poverty grew worse in West Virginia and nationwide in 2011, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Although the recession technically ended in 2009 and national and local economies should have been improving, increasing numbers of West Virginians and Americans suffered very low incomes in 2011.

The share of West Virginians living in poverty grew to 18.6 percent in 2011, up from 18.1 percent in 2010.

Nationwide, 15.9 percent of people lived in poverty in 2011, up from 15.3 percent in 2010.

The figures come from U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey data released Sept. 20 and are based on a 2011 table in which the poverty threshold for a family of four, for example, is \$22,811. Thresholds are based largely on the price of food.

By age group, the share living in poverty in West Virginia increased the most among working-age adults, ages 18-64: 18.5 percent in 2011, up from 17.8 percent in 2010.

And while fewer older West Virginians lived in poverty — 9.4 percent in 2011, down from 9.9 percent in 2010 — poverty increased among children, from 25.5 percent to 25.8 percent.

Poverty also deepened, with more people living at all levels of poverty: The number of West Virginians living at 200 percent of the poverty level grew from 718,866 to 723,911 in 2011, and at 50 percent of the poverty level grew from 129,899 to 141,408.

Notable in the data was the change in the Charleston Metropolitan Statistical Area, which includes Kanawha, Putnam, Boone, Lincoln and Clay counties. While poverty decreased or stayed about steady in other metropolitan and micropolitan statistical areas across the state, it increased in the Charleston area: from 14.6 percent to 18.2 percent.

Clay and Lincoln counties have suffered especially high rates of unemployment, noted Matthew Ballard, president and CEO of the Charleston Area Alliance.

Commenting on poverty in general, he said that the price of food, which is used to calculate poverty thresholds, has been rising, while incomes have been stagnant.

In fact, incomes fell, on average, in 2011. Median household income in West Virginia fell 2.4 percent in 2011, to \$38,482 from \$39,444 in 2010, expressed in 2011 dollars.

The state lost ground with the rest of the country, with the state median household income falling from 77.1 percent to 76.2 percent of the national median. Mississippi alone among the states fell below West Virginia in median household income, at \$36,919 in 2011.

Health insurance also took a tumble in 2011. Statewide, the share of the population uninsured grew from 14.6 percent to 14.9 percent.

However, legislation addressing the historically low rate of insurance among young adults began allowing all adult children under the age of 26 to be covered under their parents' private health insurance plans in 2010.

Census figures tracking the impact show that, in West Virginia, the share of adults ages 19-25 with health insurance coverage increased 4.4 percent: from 65.1 percent in 2009 to 69.5 percent in 2011.

Nationwide, health insurance coverage among young adults increased 3.6 percent, from 68.3 percent in 2009 to 71.8 percent in 2011.

In response to the data release, the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy called on state lawmakers to make use of tools that are available to help working families make ends meet.

"This includes expanding Medicaid to cover 120,000 low-income families through the Affordable Care Act, creating a state Earned Income Tax Credit modeled after the federal EITC, investing in child care assistance, and raising the state minimum wage," said Stuart Frazier, a policy analyst for the center.

Ballard expressed hope for the near future.

"I'm hopeful that even though the recovery from this recession is moving remarkably slow, West Virginia and our region is making progress that can position us for improvements in the 2013-2015 timeframe," he said.

Home

- News
- Weather
- Sports
- Video
- Programming
- Decision Makers
- Community
- About Us

News

- Local News
- Regional News
- WV Headlines
- OH Headlines
- KY Headlines
- State Journal
- Special Features

Weather

- Predictor
- Radar
- Maps
- Forecast Video
- Report Weather

Sports

- National Sports
- Local Sports
- WV Illustrated
- Marshall University
- Regional Sports

About Us

- Bios
- News
- Philosophy
- Advertise
- EEO File
- FCC Public Inspection File
- Internships
- Job Openings
- Contact Us

News Partners

- State Journal
- WBOY
- WTRF
- WVNS



All content © Copyright 2000 - 2012 WorldNow and WOWK. All Rights Reserved.
 For more information on this site, please read our Privacy Policy and Terms of Service.