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## Poverty, household income worsened, report says

by Dave Boucher  
Daily Mail Staff

Poverty rose slightly while household income dipped a little from 2010 to 2011 in West Virginia, according to national statistics released Wednesday.

The same trend was seen on a national level, according to the American Community Survey. The survey is conducted on a continual basis by the U.S. Census Bureau.

In 2010, about 326,500 West Virginians lived in poverty, according to the survey. That number increased in 2011 to about 335,000, or 18.6 percent of the state's population. West Virginia had the 10th-highest poverty rate nationally in 2011, one spot better than its 2010 ranking.

Nationally, the percentage of people living in poverty grew from 15.3 to 15.9 from 2010 to 2011. West Virginia was not the only state where the poverty rate increased: 31 states saw the same or larger increase in the percentage of people living in poverty, according to the survey.

The West Virginia Center on Budget & Policy emphasized the child poverty rates included in the survey data.

In 2011, more than 97,000 West Virginians who were less than 18 years old lived in poverty, almost 26 percent of all children in the state. That's up from 95,700 in 2010 and 88,600 in 2009, according to the census.

Nationally, the percent of children living in poverty rose from 21.6 percent in 2010 to 22.5 in 2011. The percentage rose in 41 states, including West Virginia.

"The large number of children in poverty in the state illustrates the need for government action," said Ted Boettner, the liberal policy center's executive director, in a news release. "Working families are struggling to get by, and now is the time to step up our efforts to help, not cut back."

West Virginia had the second lowest household median income in the country for 2011. Only Mississippi's median income of \$36,919 was lower than West Virginia's \$38,482. That number is down almost \$1,000 from 2010, when West Virginia had the third lowest median income in the nation.

Nationally, the median income dropped from \$51,144 in 2010 to \$50,502 in 2011. West Virginia was one of 36 states where the median income fell.

The survey also chose to highlight health insurance coverage of people between the ages of 19 and 25. Although the percent of West Virginians in this age bracket who are insured remains below the national average, the increase in the number of people with insurance was greater than on the national level.

In 2009, about 65 percent of West Virginians between the ages of 19 and 25 had health insurance. In 2011, that figure rose to 69.5 percent, below the 71.8 percent national average but above the national 3.6 percentage point growth.

Although 36 other states have a higher percentage of people insured in this age bracket than West Virginia, only 14 states saw a higher percentage point increase than the Mountain State.

The policy center stated the data shows West Virginia lawmakers need to expand Medicaid coverage through the

Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, create an earned income tax credit based on the federal model, invest in child care assistance and raise the state minimum wage.

For more information about the survey, visit [www.census.gov/acs/www](http://www.census.gov/acs/www).

Contact writer Dave Boucher at 304-348-4843 or [david.bouc...@dailymail.com](mailto:david.bouc...@dailymail.com). Follow him at [www.twitter.com/Dave\\_Boucher1](http://www.twitter.com/Dave_Boucher1).

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