



The Great Recession

Increased Poverty Rates

The effects of the recession on family incomes persist, even as recovery is underway.

With the release of the 2011 American Community Survey (ACS) by the U.S. Census Bureau come fresh statistics on the nature of poverty in the nation. Poverty status is determined by a family's total income for a given family size, based on thresholds established by the Census Bureau. If total family income is below the threshold, each family member is considered in poverty. In 2011, the poverty threshold for a family of four including two children below the age of 18 was \$22,811.

U.S. Poverty Trends

In the United States, before the impact of the recession was felt, the proportion of Americans living in poverty declined from 2006 to 2007 but has increased each year since. By 2011, 15.9 percent of the population lived in poverty (Figure 1).

States Comparison

Figure 2 ranks the ten states with the highest 2011 poverty rates and how they changed since 2010. The average poverty rates for Utah and the United States are represented as horizontal lines.

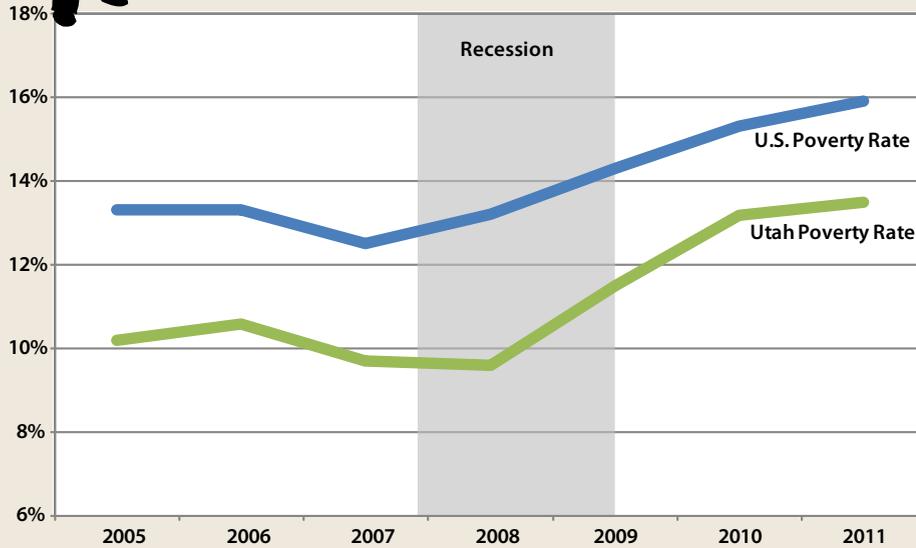
Mississippi, where 22.4 percent of the population lived below the poverty line, had the highest poverty rate in 2011. The top ten poverty rankings do not fluctuate rapidly. Eight of the ten states with the highest proportions in 2011 also ranked in the top ten in 2010 and seven in 2009. Of the top ten states, only the District of Columbia's poverty rate decreased from 2010 to 2011, and only four from all remaining states exhibited declining rates.

Poverty rates for 28 states were lower than the 15.9 percent United States average. The lowest was in New Hampshire, where the poverty rate was 8.8 percent. Utah's poverty rate ranked 18 lowest in 2011, up one spot from 2010. While the state's proportion of poverty increased from 13.2 to 13.5 percent, the growth that began in 2008 has slowed down.

The 2011 ACS estimates reveal that the nation's share of people living in poverty increased from 2010 to 2011, continuing a trend that began at the onset of the recession in 2007. The effects of the recession on family incomes persist, even as recovery is underway. ●

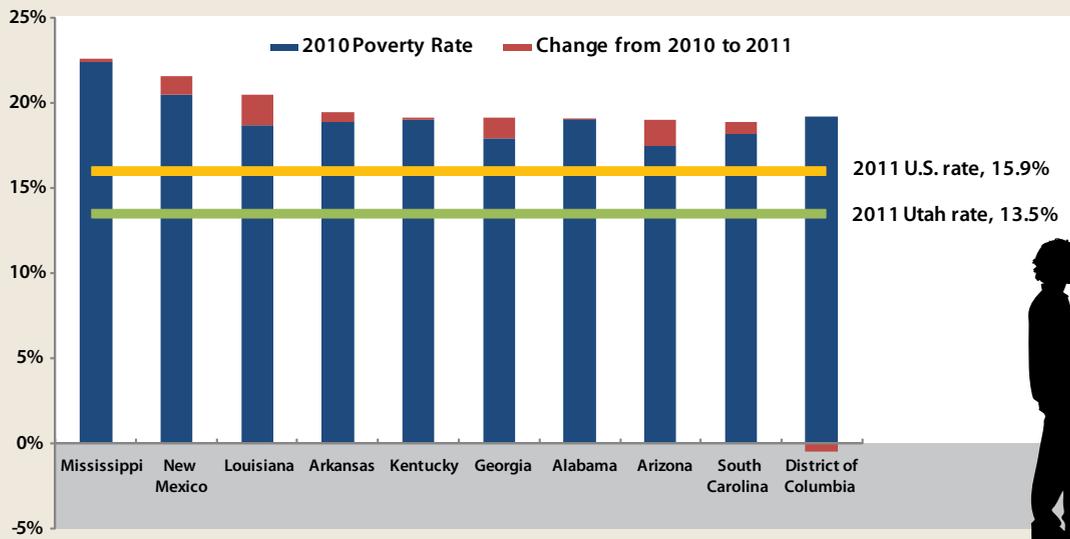


Figure 1: Poverty Rates in the United States and Utah, 2005–2011



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, National Bureau of Economic Research

Figure 2: Top Ten States with Highest Poverty Rates, 2011



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

