The Demography of Inequality in the United States

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Poverty Fluctuated, But Inequality Rose Steadily Since 1960s

Source: Current Population Survey
Intersection of Poverty and Inequality

1989

Map showing the intersection of poverty and inequality across the United States in 1989. The map is color-coded to indicate different levels of inequality and poverty: High-Inequality/High-Poverty, High-Inequality/Low-Poverty, Low-Inequality/High-Poverty, Low-Inequality/Low-Poverty, and No data. The source of the data is PRB analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, American Community Survey; Arizona State University, GeoDa Center.
Intersection of Poverty and Inequality

1999

Source: PRB analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, American Community Survey; Arizona State University, GeoDa Center
Intersection of Poverty and Inequality

2012

Source: PRB analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, American Community Survey; Arizona State University, GeoDa Center
Intersection of Poverty and Inequality

1989

Source: PRB analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, American Community Survey; Arizona State University, GeoDa Center
Intersection of Poverty and Inequality

No data
High-Inequality/High-Poverty
Low-Inequality/High-Poverty
High-Inequality/Low-Poverty
Low-Inequality/Low-Poverty
Intersection of Poverty and Inequality

2012

No data
High-Inequality/High-Poverty
Low-Inequality/High-Poverty
High-Inequality/Low-Poverty
Low-Inequality/Low-Poverty

Source: PRB analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, American Community Survey; Arizona State University, GeoDa Center
Two-thirds of Counties Now Have High Inequality, High Poverty or Both

Source: PRB analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, American Community Survey; Arizona State University, GeoDa Center
There is a persistent racial/ethnic gap in poverty rates.

Wealth Is Nearly 18 Times Higher Among White Households Compared With Black Households

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2008 Panel, Wave 10
Children Are Disproportionately Affected By Poverty

U.S. Poverty What-If Scenario

**STEP 1:**
Choose an age group (initial line shows time series)
- Child Poverty: Ages 0-17 in poverty
- Working-age adult poverty: Ages 18-64 in poverty
- Older adult poverty: Ages 65 and older in poverty

**STEP 2:**
Choose a rate scenario (initial projection uses Census Bureau's middle series)
- Current rate: What if the current rates by age and race and ethnicity didn't change between now and 2050?
- No inequality rate (by race and ethnicity): What if all people experience rates between now and 2050 no higher than the current rates of non-Hispanic whites in their age group?

**STEP 3:**
Choose a projection series
- What if the future racial and ethnic population equaled the Census Bureau's High/Low projections based on different assumptions about the level of international migration to the U.S.?

U.S. Poverty What-If Scenario

**STEP 1:**
Choose an age group (initial line shows time series)

- **Child Poverty**
  Ages 0-17 in poverty

- **Working-Age Adult Poverty**
  Ages 18-64 in poverty

- **Older Adult Poverty**
  Ages 65 and older in poverty

**STEP 2:**
Choose a rate scenario (initial projection uses Census Bureau’s middle series)

- **Current Rate**
  What if the current rates by age and race and ethnicity didn’t change between now and 2050?

- **No Inequality Rate (by race and ethnicity)**
  What if all people experience rates between now and 2050 no higher than the current rates of non-Hispanic whites in their age group?

**STEP 3:**
Choose a projection series

- **Current Rate**
  Low
  High

What if the future racial and ethnic population equaled the Census Bureau’s High/Low projections based on different assumptions about the level of international migration to the U.S.?
What-If: Projections of Children in Poverty

Number of children in Poverty

- Historical
- Constant Rates, Low
- No Inequality, Low
- Constant Rates, Middle
- No Inequality, Middle
- Constant Rates, High
- No Inequality, High

Source: Population Reference Bureau Analysis of Data from U.S. Census Bureau, Projections and Current Population Survey
Eliminating Poverty Gaps Would Reduce the Number in Poverty by 24 Mil in 2050

Half of Young, Single Women With Children Are Poor

Poverty Rate 5% For College Graduates, 28% For Those Without High School Diploma

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey