



POVERTY QUIZ

Is poverty in the United States getting worse?

What do Americans think about government's role?

Where do we stand compared to other countries?

Who is poor, and what does "poverty" mean, anyway?

This short Poverty Quiz may not count toward your final grade, but you can find out how much you know about some basic facts of poverty in America.

Start the quiz



POVERTY USA - QUIZ

1. The number of people living in poverty in the United States decreased from 2006 to 2007.

TRUE FALSE

2. The number of families in poverty is decreasing.

TRUE FALSE

3. The "working poor" in America are growing even poorer.

TRUE FALSE

4. According to the U.S. government, a family of four—two adults and two children—is poor if it earns less than \$35,000 annually.

TRUE FALSE

5. African Americans have the highest number of people in poverty.

TRUE FALSE

6. The rate of child poverty is higher in the United States than in most other economically advanced countries.

TRUE FALSE

7. The federal minimum wage is \$5.85 per hour.

TRUE FALSE

8. The poverty rate among the elderly in the United States is higher than that of any other age group.

TRUE FALSE

9. Most Americans believe the federal government should play a smaller role in helping the poor.

TRUE FALSE

POVERTY QUIZ – ANSWERS

QUESTION 1

The number of people living in poverty in the United States decreased from 2006 to 2007.

This is **false**. The number of people living in poverty increased in 2007 over 2006, from about 36.5 million, to about 37.3 million people. The poverty rate—the percentage of the people in the United States living in poverty—also rose 0.2 percent, to 12.5 percent, in 2007.

Source: *Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2007*. U.S. Census Bureau.

QUESTION 2

The number of families in poverty is decreasing.

This is **false**; the number of families in poverty is about the same. In 2007, out of 78.5 million U.S. families, 7.62 million lived in poverty—not statistically different, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, from the 7.66 million families in 2006 and 2005. The poverty rate for families remained 9.8 percent, also unchanged from 2006 and 2005.

Source: *Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2007*. U.S. Census Bureau.

QUESTION 3

The "working poor" in America are growing even poorer.

This is **true**. For the first time on record, poverty and the incomes of typical working-age households have worsened despite six consecutive years of economic growth. In terms of poverty and median income, the economic expansion that started at the end of 2001 was the worst on record; the gains from the expansion flowed primarily to high-income households. Median income for working-age households was lower in 2006 than in 2001, the lowest point in the last recession.

The number and percentage of Americans without health insurance remained much greater.

Source: *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2008*

QUESTION 4

According to the U.S. government, a family of four—two adults and two children—is poor if it earns less than \$35,000 annually.

This is **false**. The federal "poverty threshold" in 2007 for a family of four with two children 17 or younger is \$21,027.

However, a majority of Americans believe it takes at least \$35,000 annually to provide adequately for a family of four. (*Poverty Pulse poll, 2000*)

Source: *Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2007*. U.S. Census Bureau.

QUESTION 5

African Americans have the highest number of people in poverty.

This is **false**. Over 16 million non-Hispanic white Americans live below the poverty line in 2007. There are 9.9 million Hispanics (of any race) in poverty, 9.2 million African Americans, and 1.3 million Asian Americans in poverty. As a percentage of the population, however, one in four African Americans lives in poverty, the highest percentage of any group.

Source: *Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2007*. U.S. Census Bureau.

POVERTY QUIZ – ANSWERS – CONTINUED

QUESTION 6

The rate of child poverty is higher in the United States than in most other economically advanced countries.

This is **true**. Despite having the highest national income among major economically advanced countries, the real child poverty rate in the United States (18.5%) is among the highest. Taiwan has a national income only slightly higher than Spain and Israel, but one of the lowest child poverty rates (4.3%). Finland (2.6), Sweden (3.7), Austria (5.4), and Denmark (4.6), among others, also have low child poverty rates, but incomes only slightly higher than Taiwan.

Source: *Society at a Glance 2005*. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

QUESTION 7

The federal minimum wage is \$5.85 per hour.

This is **false**. The federal minimum wage became \$6.55 per hour effective July 24, 2008; and will become \$7.25 per hour effective July 24, 2009.

*A single parent with one child working at this minimum wage full-time every week of the year (\$6.55 x 40 x 52) earns \$13,624 before any deductions or taxes—that's **\$667 below** the poverty threshold of \$14,291 (or more than 2½ weeks' pay).*

Source: Poverty threshold: *Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2007*. U.S. Census Bureau.

QUESTION 8

The poverty rate among the elderly in the United States is higher than that of any other age group.

This is **false**. The poverty rate for America's elderly (people over 65) did increase significantly in 2007, to 9.7 percent, or roughly one out of every ten seniors. But the poverty rate for minors (aged 17 and under) is 18 percent, or more than one out of every six children in America.

Source: *Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2007*. U.S. Census Bureau.

QUESTION 9

Most Americans believe the federal government should play a smaller role in helping the poor.

This is **false**. Nine out of ten Americans believe the federal government has a responsibility to alleviate poverty. A strong majority believes that government should do **more**, not less, to help people move from welfare to work, by providing skills needed to be self-sufficient.

Source: Lake Snell Perry & Associates, Inc. *Public Views on Welfare Reform and Children in the Current Economy*. 2002. Packard Foundation.