



ENDING POVERTY

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Nation's Poverty Rate Declines, While Illinois Is Left Behind

Erosion in health insurance coverage raises concerns

CHICAGO, IL, September 14, 2018 – Recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau revealed that the poverty rate in Illinois stayed stagnant from 2016 to 2017, while poverty declined nationwide. And while the nation returned to pre-recession levels of poverty last year, poverty in Illinois remains stubbornly high—12.6% compared to 11.9% in 2007 before the recession. In addition to the flat poverty rate, the data found that health insurance coverage rates **declined in Illinois for the first time since the implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA)**. Despite administrative attacks on the ACA, uninsured rates stayed constant nationwide.

“While many indicators of well-being are improving across the country, Illinois poverty still has not rebounded from the recession. Hundreds of thousands of working people live in poverty, and Illinoisans of color are still lagging behind white people on income growth and poverty rates,” said Katie Buitrago, director of the Social IMPACT Research Center at Heartland Alliance. “There’s strong evidence that safety net programs play a critical role in moving people out of poverty, but they are under attack at both state and national levels.”

The United States has been in economic recovery for a number of years, with three consecutive years of strong gains in the median household income. Although median household income grew from 2016 to 2017 in Illinois, it is still below pre-recession levels. Substantial improvements for Illinois, and the nation, have been slow to reach those who need it most.

“The national uninsured rate held steady in 2017, but the persistent hostility from opponents of the Affordable Care Act and Medicaid put the historic coverage gains of the last few years in jeopardy,” said Dan Rabbitt, Senior Project Manager for Health Policy at Heartland Alliance. “The increase in the uninsured rate in Illinois and stalling of progress elsewhere show the policy choices leading up to 2017 that cut off payments to insurers and canceled ACA marketing had an impact. We worry that this reversal of progress is a sign of things to come, unless the Administration chooses to cease its efforts to undermine the ACA at every turn and instead decides to build constructively upon the progress that has been made.”

Illinois managed to pass an FY19 budget, which brings desperately-needed stability and predictability to the human service sector. Unfortunately, we have few resources to regain the losses incurred by the state during years of the budget impasse and meet the overwhelming need in our communities.

Additional findings from the release revealed:

- **Illinois's 2017 poverty rate (12.6%) is not significantly different from 2016 (13.0%).** The poverty rate is still 0.7 percentage points above its pre-recession 2007 level of 11.9%, and bucks national downward trends in the poverty rate.
- **Extreme poverty—having income below half the poverty line—was also stagnant from 2016 to 2017 in Illinois, and is now at 5.8%.** 724,307 Illinoisans are extremely poor.
- **Illinois median household income grew from 2016 to 2017,** and is now \$62,992. Income is still 3% below its pre-recession 2007 level.
- **The rate of non-seniors in Illinois who are uninsured grew to 7.8%, a 0.4 percentage point increase from 2016.** This is the first time since the implementation of the ACA that uninsurance rates grew. 841,151 non-seniors remain uninsured.
- **While white households in Illinois experienced an increase in median household income, black and Latino incomes stayed flat.**
- **People of color are disproportionately impacted by poverty:** 8.8% of white, non-Latino Illinoisans are poor compared to 26.2% of black Illinoisans and 15% of Latino Illinoisans.
- **Nearly one in four Illinois renter households pay more than half of their income in rent.**
- **Safety net programs play a critical role in helping people make ends meet:** nationwide, Social Security moved 27.0 million people out of poverty, refundable tax credits moved 8.3 million people out of poverty, while SNAP lifted 3.4 million people out of poverty.
 - SNAP is threatened by the House version of the Farm Bill (H.R. 2). Structural changes and harsh work rules included in the bill could take SNAP benefits away from 2 million people.

[Read the fact sheet](#) on Illinois and Chicago region poverty, income, and health insurance trends based on the newly released data.

[Download data books](#) for Chicago Community Areas and for all cities and townships in the 6-county Chicago metropolitan region.

[Access the Census Bureau's local demographic, social, economic, and housing data](#) that were released today for places with populations of 65,000 or more. Contact Heartland Alliance for assistance accessing and interpreting the data.

Heartland Alliance Poverty Experts Available for Commentary

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Heartland Alliance for Human Rights & Human Needs – Heartland Alliance, one of the world's leading anti-poverty organizations, works in communities in the U.S. and abroad to serve those who are homeless, living in poverty, or seeking safety. It provides a comprehensive array of services in the areas of health, housing, jobs, and justice – and leads state and national policy efforts, which target lasting change for individuals and society. For more information visit, www.heartlandalliance.org or follow us on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/heartlandhelps> or like us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/heartlandalliance>.

Heartland Alliance Research & Policy - Heartland Alliance's Research & Policy Division focuses on the realization of human rights through ending poverty, racism, and injustice by engaging in research on social issues and solutions, policy and systems change, and field building nationwide. Learn more [at https://www.heartlandalliance.org/get-informed/research-policy-landing](https://www.heartlandalliance.org/get-informed/research-policy-landing).

Illinois and Chicago Region



POVERTY, INCOME, AND HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE

Millions of people in Illinois experience poverty or are living on the brink. That societal position keeps opportunities out of reach and nearly guarantees worse outcomes in every quality of life domain—making ALL of us worse off.

The poverty rate for the United States was 12.3% in 2017. There were 39.7 million people in poverty nationwide. The poverty rate is not significantly different from the pre-recession level of 12.5% in 2007. In 2017, 1.6 million Illinoisans were in poverty — a rate of 12.6%. Additionally, 2.0 million Illinoisans are near poor and economically insecure with incomes between 100% and 199% of the federal poverty threshold.

The fact that poverty remained persistently high and income stagnant despite job growth points to the fact that Illinois clearly faces significant challenges related to job quality. While the nation's poverty rate has returned to pre-recession levels, Illinois's poverty rate remains stubbornly high. And historic gains to health insurance coverage are at risk, with Illinois one of 14 states that saw growth in the uninsured rate for the first time since ACA implementation.

Illinois

	2007		2016		2017	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Poverty	1,496,248	11.9	1,621,508*	13.0*	1,569,753*	12.6
Extreme Poverty	667,578	5.3	738,806*	5.9*	724,307	5.8
Low Income/Near Poor	2,029,262	16.2	2,060,534	16.5	2,027,266	16.2
Related Child Poverty	511,142	16.3	501,827*	17.5*	477,202	16.8
No Health Insurance [†]	1,597,086	14.2	801,134*	7.4*	841,151	7.8*
Median Household Income [^]	\$64,970	--	\$62,102	--	\$62,992*	--
Med. earnings, full-time year round workers	--	--	--	--	\$50,560	--

Chicago

	2007		2016		2017	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Poverty	550,580	20.5	505,365*	19.1*	495,511	18.6
Extreme Poverty	244,498	9.1	226,763*	8.6*	225,842	8.5
Low Income/Near Poor	554,636	20.6	538,384	20.3	535,679	20.1
Related Child Poverty	201,748	30.6	157,749*	28.0*	151,290	27.2
No Health Insurance [†]	526,082	21.6	252,058*	10.6*	257,434	10.9
Median Household Income [^]	\$54,624	--	\$53,006	--	\$55,295	--
Med. earnings, full-time year round workers	--	--	--	--	\$50,356	--

6-County Chicago Region

	2007		2016		2017	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Poverty	936,259	11.3	1,013,725*	12.3*	959,140*	11.6*
Extreme Poverty	416,119	5.0	455,048*	5.5*	442,920	5.4
Low Income/Near Poor	1,277,860	15.4	1,313,841	16.0	1,298,395	15.7
Related Child Poverty	339,216	15.8	325,177*	17.0*	295,958*	15.6*
No Health Insurance†	1,151,068	15.4	601,046*	8.4*	624,177*	8.7*

Poverty by County (6-County Region)





	2007		2016		2017	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Cook County	758,802	14.6	763,242*	14.9*	740,193	14.4
DuPage County	41,366	4.5	63,806	7.0	55,360	6.0
Kane County	37,750	7.6	56,729	10.8	48,407	9.2
Lake County	42,197	6.1	58,653	8.5	50,592	7.4
McHenry County	17,943	5.7	23,974	7.9	18,471	6.0*
Will County	38,201	5.8	47,321	7.0	46,117	6.8

Measuring Poverty

Official poverty data are based on the federal poverty thresholds, which are used to determine poverty status. The measure is not geographically specific and does not reflect what it takes for families to make ends meet.

Far more people struggle to make ends meet than the official poverty data suggest. The Living Wage Calculator shows that it takes a family of 3 (adult, young child, and child) \$62,781 to be economically secure in Illinois.

2017 FEDERAL POVERTY THRESHOLDS (WEIGHTED AVERAGE)

Family Size	Extreme Poverty (0-49% FPL)	Poverty (0-99% FPL)	Low Income (100-199% FPL)
	\$6,244	\$12,488	\$24,976
	\$7,939	\$15,877	\$31,754
	\$9,758	\$19,515	\$39,030
	\$12,547	\$25,094	\$50,188

* Denotes change from prior year in table is statistically significant. † Health insurance coverage estimates reflect 2008—the first year they were collected—rather than 2007. Estimates are for the population under age 65. ^ 6-County region includes the following counties: Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will.

National data come from the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. All sub-national data are derived from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey 1-year estimates program. The most recent American Community Survey estimates reflect 2016 income, poverty, and health insurance coverage, which are the most current data available for geographies with populations over 65,000. For more information on the American Community Survey, visit www.census.gov/acs/www/.

Statistical significance refers to the probability that the observed changes are "true" rather than the result of an error in sampling or estimation. Data included here are statistically significant at the 90th percentile.

The Living Wage Calculator was created by Dr. Amy K. Glasmeier at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Available at <http://livingwage.mit.edu/>