

INCOME, POVERTY, AND HEALTH INSURANCE IN THE UNITED STATES IN 1999¹

Income

Between 1998 and 1999, median household income in the U.S. increased 2.7 percent, the fifth consecutive year that real (inflation-adjusted) income increased significantly. The median income of U.S. households in 1999 was \$40,816 (Table 1).

All age groups experienced increases in real median household income from 1998 to 1999. The increases were statistically significant for all age groups at the 90 percent confidence level, except for those aged 55 to 64. For example, median household income for those aged 65 and over increased from \$22,209 in 1998 to \$22,812 in 1999 (a 2.7 percent increase) (Table 1).

Poverty

There were 32.2 million persons in poverty in 1999, 2.2 million fewer than in 1998. The overall poverty rate in 1999, 11.8 percent, declined 0.9 percent points from 1998, a statistically significant decrease. However, the 1999 poverty rate

was not significantly different from the pre-recession rate in 1989 (12.8 percent) (Table 2).

The poverty rate declined for all age groups from 1998 to 1999 (except for persons aged 18 to 24), but not all of these decreases in poverty were significant. Poverty rates in 1999 were still significantly higher than those rates in 1989 for persons aged 18 to 24 and aged 35 to 44. Only for persons aged 25 to 34, aged 45 to 59, and aged 65 and over were poverty rates significantly lower than the 1989 level (Table 2).

In 1999, the poverty rate among those aged 65 and over was 9.7 percent, statistically significantly lower than the rate from 1998 (10.5 percent) and lower than the rate for all ages (11.8 percent). However, the threshold used to establish poverty status for older persons is about 10 percent lower than for other age groups. The poverty threshold in 1999 was \$7,990 for a single person aged 65 and over and \$8,661 for single persons under age 65. For couples, the threshold was \$10,075 for

Age of Householder	Median Income in 1999 Dollars				Percent Change in Real Income 1998-1999
	1989	1997	1998	1999	
All Ages	\$38,721	\$38,411	\$39,744	\$40,816	*2.7%
15 to 24 years	\$24,940	\$23,442	\$24,084	\$25,171	*4.5%
25 to 34 years	\$39,903	\$39,625	\$40,954	\$42,174	*3.0%
35 to 44 years	\$50,399	\$48,121	\$49,521	\$50,873	*2.7%
45 to 54 years	\$55,780	\$53,847	\$55,344	\$56,917	*2.8%
55 to 64 years	\$41,465	\$42,928	\$44,120	\$44,597	1.1%
65 years and over	\$21,177	\$21,550	\$22,209	\$22,812	*2.7%

* Statistically significant change at 90 percent confidence level
Source: U.S. Department of Commerce

¹ Based on the U.S. Census Bureau's March 2000 Current Population Survey

Age	Percent of Persons Below Poverty				Changes in Poverty Rate	Changes in Poverty Rate
	1989	1997	1998	1999	1998 to 1999	1989 to 1999
All Ages	12.8%	13.3%	12.7%	11.8%	*-0.9	-1.0
Under 18	19.6%	19.9%	18.9%	16.9%	*-2.0	-2.7
18 to 24 years	15.2%	17.5%	16.6%	17.3%	0.7	*2.1
25 to 34 years	11.1%	12.1%	11.9%	10.5%	*-1.4	*-0.6
35 to 44 years	8.1%	9.6%	9.1%	8.3%	*-0.8	*0.2
45 to 54 years	7.4%	7.2%	6.9%	6.7%	0.2	*-0.7
55 to 59 years	9.7%	9.0%	9.2%	9.2%	-0.1	*-0.5
60 to 64 years	9.5%	11.2%	10.1%	9.8%	-0.3	0.3
65 years and over	11.4%	10.5%	10.5%	9.7%	*-0.7	*-1.7

* Statistically significant change at 90 percent confidence level
Source: U.S. Department of Commerce

those aged 65 and over and \$11,214 for those under age 65.

In 1999, 15.8 percent of older persons were below poverty or near-poor, defined respectively as below the poverty line and between 1.0 and 1.25 times the poverty line (Table 3). The latter rate is higher than for any age group except those under age 25, and it would be higher still if the same poverty threshold were applied to both elderly and nonelderly persons.

Health Insurance Coverage

An estimated 42.6 million persons were without health insurance coverage during the entire 1999 calendar year (15.5 percent of the total population). This

number was about 1.7 million lower than in 1998, and the proportion uninsured of the total population fell for the first time since 1987, and by a statistically significant amount. The number of uninsured persons aged 50 to 64 was 5.6 million in 1999, 14.0 percent of all persons in this age group. The number of uninsured children under age 18 was 10.02 million in 1999 (13.9 percent of all children); this presents a decrease of about 1.05 million from 1998 (11.07 million in 1998).

A majority of the nation's population (71.0 percent) was covered by a private insurance plan for some or all of 1999. Other sources of insurance included government coverage through Medicare (13.2 percent), Medicaid (10.2 percent), and military health care coverage (3.1 percent).²

	Percent Under 1.00	Percent Under 1.25	Percent Under 2.00
All Persons	11.8%	16.2%	30.1%
Under 18	16.9%	22.5%	38.8%
18 to 24 years	17.3%	22.4%	37.8%
25 to 34 years	10.5%	14.4%	28.0%
35 to 44 years	8.3%	11.6%	23.1%
45 to 54 years	6.7%	9.2%	17.5%
55 to 59 years	9.2%	12.1%	21.3%
60 to 64 years	9.8%	13.8%	25.2%
65 years and over	9.7%	15.8%	35.9%

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce

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² Health insurance coverage and uninsured percentages do not sum to 100 percent because some individuals have more than one type of coverage.