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Ohio Poverty Report

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THE OHIO POVERTY REPORT

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NOTES

- 1 Poverty status is determined for all people except those in institutions, military group quarters or college dormitories, and unrelated individuals under 15 years old (children who are not related family members). The 2009 American Community Survey data were collected each month of that year, and poverty statistics refer to the 12 months preceding the month the survey was completed. Consequently, the actual time period covered by the Survey extends from January 2008 through November 2009. The 2009 datasets were released in the latter half of 2010.
- 2 Numbers throughout the report frequently are rounded to avoid the impression of greater precision than warranted. Following the procedure recommended by the Census Bureau (2002c), all of the estimates for Ohio based on the Current Population Survey data are three-year moving averages. That means that the estimates of poor in Ohio for any non-decennial census year are based not only on the Survey for that year, but on the data covering the preceding and following years as well. For example, the estimates for 1990 are based on data gathered for the years 1989 (from the decennial census) through 1991, and the estimates for 1991 are based on data gathered for the years 1990 through 1992. With a larger sample size, this procedure produces more reliable estimates – especially for percentages. It also reduces the erratic changes seen when only one year of data is used. However, what is gained in reliability is lost in specificity. A three-year moving average for 1991 refers to a three-year period centered on 1991. Excluded from the Survey-based calculations are unrelated children under 15 years old and many group quarters residents. Unlike the decennial census, Current Population Survey data include college students in dorms as parts of their families of orientation, and therefore as persons for whom poverty status is determined. There is nothing that can be done to change this and its reduction of comparability with estimates from other Census Bureau programs. Fortunately, the effect is small.
- 3 However, unrelated persons sharing a housing unit (e.g., roommates) may split expenses such as utilities and rent, permitting more of their income to be devoted to food.
- 4 The high poverty rate in Athens may be partially explained by the large portion of the population that are students living off-campus.
- 5 Starting at the southwestern end, the 32 include Clermont, Brown, Highland, Adams, Scioto, Pike, Ross, Hocking, Vinton, Jackson, Lawrence, Gallia, Meigs, Athens, Perry, Morgan, Washington, Monroe, Noble, Muskingum, Coshocton, Guernsey, Belmont, Jefferson, Harrison, Tuscarawas, Holmes, Carroll, Columbiana, Mahoning, Trumbull and Ashtabula. Ten are in metropolitan areas: Belmont, Brown, Carroll, Clermont, Columbiana, Jefferson, Lawrence, Mahoning, Trumbull and Washington.

- 6 Several things need to be remembered when comparing the 2000 Census data with the 2005-9 American Community Survey data. First, metropolitan areas often were redefined as a result of the 2000 Census. Specific geographic areas compared may not be exactly the same. (This is certainly true for the summary figures.) The same may be true of the urban/rural dichotomy and one or more cities listed in Appendix Table A3b. Second, the validity of testing for significant changes in poverty rates is questionable to the extent that the geographic areas – and their populations – differ. Finally, the urban/rural and metropolitan/non-metropolitan dichotomies are not identical. Metropolitan areas have rural sections, and urban places are found in non-metropolitan areas.
- 7 Athens, Bowling Green, Kent and Oxford are small college towns in which off-campus students comprise relatively large portions of the populations. Off-campus students not living with their families of orientation frequently qualify as poor because some sources of money they may receive and use – loans and irregular gifts – are not counted as income by the Census Bureau. Consequently, their large presence in small towns may drive the communities' poverty rates to high levels. In this circumstance, a community's family poverty rate may be a more useful measure of the extent of poverty because students are less likely to be married. Indeed, the family poverty rates of Athens, Bowling Green, Kent and Oxford – 18.6, 9.6, 17.8 and 16.2 percent, respectively – are closer to the state's rate of 10.0 percent than are the corresponding poverty rates for persons (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2010c).
- 8 These data points may be artifacts of the Census Bureau's methodology. Members of family households are assumed to share the income of all members, while members of non-family households are not. Consequently, the poverty rate of non-family households is really the poverty rate of the householder, regardless of how many other people may live in the household and what their income may be. In practice, unrelated people have roommates to reduce their expenses, thereby leaving larger portions of their incomes for food.
- 9 Cash public assistance includes supplemental security income payments made to low income persons who are at least 65 years old, blind, or disabled. It also includes aid to families with dependent children and general assistance. Payments received for medical care are excluded (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992a). Families that are not poor may receive cash public assistance because eligibility is not always cut-off at 100 percent of the poverty level, because a member worked part of the year during which the family received assistance, or because they were poor during the preceding year. Those that had incomes below the poverty level may not have received public assistance because they did not apply for it, or because they did not meet all of the eligibility requirements.
- 10 Race is a matter of self-identification. "Hispanic" is an ethnic status, and Hispanics may be of any race. Bi- and multi-racial categories were used for the first time in the 2000 Census. While only a small percentage of people identify themselves as such, the addition of this category means that the racial categories of 2000 and 2009 are

not entirely comparable with those of previous censuses. Similarly, data on Hispanics may not be entirely comparable over time due to slight differences in the ways the questions were asked during different censuses (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2002b: Appendix B).

- 11 An exception to this last statement is the consideration of the householder's age. Families of one or two persons with householders age 65 years and older have lower income requirements than do corresponding families with younger householders (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992a: B-28).
- 12 The householder is the person in whose name the occupied housing unit is owned or rented. Persons related to one another by birth, marriage or adoption – but living with a householder to whom they are *not* related – comprise (specifically) an unrelated subfamily (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992a).
- 13 This definition of income has much in common with those used by the Internal Revenue Service and the Bureau of Economic Analysis, but it is not identical with the definitions used by the latter two. Consequently, area statistics produced by the latter may strongly correlate with poverty statistics, but do not substitute for them. Also, it is possible to calculate a ratio of income to poverty level:

$$\text{Ratio} = \text{Family's Income} / \text{Family's Poverty Threshold.}$$

Some data tables in this report present statistics by the ratio of income to poverty level. The poor have a ratio value less than 1.00. Those at or above 1.00 – but still close to it – may be regarded as the near-poor.

- 14 It should be mentioned that both official and experimental measures of poverty are limited in assessing a family's ability to meet its needs when they consider only the family's income. Poverty measures ignore any wealth a family may have and use in meeting its minimum needs; a family may use its savings to compensate for any short fall of income. However, this is a minor quibble. Data show that low-income households generally have fewer assets of any sort on which to draw if necessary (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2001a: Table C).

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