

Over 56 Million Americans Live in Poverty: How the Census Bureau Ignores the Suffering of 10 Million Impoverished Americans

By [David DeGraw](#)

Global Research, September 14, 2011

[AmpedStatus.org](#) 14 September 2011

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Poverty & Social Inequality](#)

✘ Here we go again. The government and corporate media are pumping out more propaganda on vital economic statistics to mask the severity of our economic crisis. Deceptive [unemployment](#), [GDP](#), [inflation](#) and [poverty](#) measures are easily exposed with some research and a closer look at the data. The latest deception comes from the Census Bureau in their annual poverty report, which is now uncritically being “reported” on throughout the corporate media and echoing throughout online news outlets as well.

The new Census data reveals that a stunning [46.2 million](#) Americans, 15.1% of the population, lived in poverty in 2010. This is an increase of 2.6 million people since 2009. While these are staggering statistics that represent the highest number of American people to ever live in poverty, and a dramatic year-over-year increase, it significantly undercounts the total.

The Census Bureau poverty rate is a highly flawed measurement that uses outdated methodology. The Census measures poverty based on costs of living metrics established in 1955 — 56 years ago. They ignore many key factors, such as the increased costs of medical care, child care, education, transportation, and many other basic expenses. They also don't factor geographically-based costs of living. For example, try finding a place to live in New York that costs the same as a place in Florida. A much more accurate measurement of poverty, which factors in these vital cost of living variables, comes from the National Academy of Sciences (NAS). Unlike the Census poverty measure, which gets significant coverage throughout the corporate media, the NAS measurement gets little, if any, mainstream media coverage.

To see how the Census Bureau drastically undercounts poverty totals, let's look at the past few years of data. In 2008, the Census reported that 39.8 million Americans lived in poverty. However, based on NAS calculations, 47.4 million Americans lived in poverty that year. In 2008, the Census undercounted by 7.6 million people. For the year of 2009, the Census reported that 43.6 million Americans lived in poverty. In [my analysis](#), extrapolating data from 2008 NAS measurement, I estimated that the number of Americans living in poverty in 2009 was [at least 52 million](#). After making this estimate, the NAS measurement was released, backing up my claim by revealing that [52.8 million](#) Americans lived in poverty. In 2009, the Census undercounted by 9.2 million people.

The 2010 NAS poverty totals are yet to be released, so let's extrapolate data from the new Census statistics in comparison to past NAS data, in the same way we accurately estimated

the NAS 2009 poverty totals, to estimate the total number of Americans living in poverty in 2010:



As a general statistical trend, for every one person the Census counts as being in poverty, using NAS calculations 1.2 people are in poverty. In other words, the trend has been for every 10 people the Census reports as living in poverty, NAS reports there are 12. This would mean that 55.4 million people lived in poverty in 2010.

However, with costs of living [sharply increasing](#), the discrepancy between the Census and NAS totals has also been increasing. Over the past two years, for every one additional person the Census counts as falling into poverty, 1.42 people fall into poverty as calculated by NAS methodology. This would mean that 56.5 million people lived in poverty in 2010.

Therefore, after extrapolating the data, we can estimate that at least 56 million Americans, roughly 18.5% of the population, lived in poverty in 2010 according to NAS methodology, approximately 10 million more than the Census Bureau is reporting.

So when you hear the government and media tell you that 46 million Americans lived in poverty in 2010, while that is horrifying enough, you should know that even that shocking statistic is putting a *major positive spin* on this economic disaster that is still far from over.

Also, keep in mind that the Census defines poverty as an income of \$22,314 per year for a family of four. *That's \$22,314 per year for four people.* Given today's dramatically increasing costs of living, a family of four trying to live on \$22k per year is an extremely low poverty threshold.

To put this all in context, while 56 million Americans, 18.5% of the population, live in poverty, US millionaire households have [\\$46 trillion in wealth](#), yet only *one-tenth of one percent* of the population makes over [\\$1 million per year](#).

The United States currently has the highest inequality of wealth in our nation's history. Tens of millions of Americans are stressing out wondering how they are going to keep food on the table and pay their bills, meanwhile the people who [caused this crisis](#) are rolling around in trillions of dollars.

The statistics speak for themselves. The Robber Barons have now been displaced as America's most despotic and [depraved ruling class](#).

David DeGraw is the editor of [AmpedStatus.com](#). His long-awaited book, [The Road Through 2012](#), will finally be released on September 28th. He can be emailed at David@AmpedStatus.com.

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