

10 FACTS ABOUT SUBURBAN POVERTY

Most Americans think of poverty as an urban problem but did you know that:

1. For decades, the poor population in America's suburbs has grown faster than anywhere else in the country. During the 2000s, the number of poor people living in the suburbs grew by 64 percent—more than twice the growth rate in cities (29 percent).
2. Today, more poor people live in the suburbs than in America's big cities or rural areas. Suburbia is home to almost 16.4 million poor people, compared to 13.4 million in big cities and 7.3 million in rural areas.
3. Throughout the 2000s, the suburban poor population grew significantly in 85 of the nation's 95 largest metropolitan areas. Rising poverty has touched all kinds of suburbs—even places that once seemed immune to these challenges.
4. By the end of the 2000s, one-third of the suburban poor lived in distressed neighborhoods, where at least one in five residents was poor.
5. The urban and suburban poor have similar characteristics. Similar shares of suburban and urban poor residents live in deep poverty (with incomes below half the federal poverty line); are working age; work; have a disability; finished college; or are foreign-born.
6. As jobs moved into suburbs—particularly lower-paying jobs in sectors like retail and hospitality—poverty did, too. And job losses triggered by the Great Recession in industries like construction, manufacturing, and retail hit hardest in suburban communities and contributed to rising suburban unemployment and poverty.
7. Immigration accounted for only a fraction of the growth of poverty in suburbs. Although foreign-born residents accounted for 30 percent of the overall population growth in suburban areas, they contributed just 17 percent to the increase in overall suburban poor during the 2000s.
8. The changing location of affordable housing contributed to suburban poverty throughout the 2000s. By the end of 2010, roughly half of residents in voucher households lived in suburbs. In addition, three-quarters of foreclosures occurred in suburbia.
9. There is no good place to be poor but being poor in the suburbs means facing a unique set of challenges. Poor suburban residents have fewer transit options available that can affect their ability to get to work. In the nation's largest metropolitan areas, 700,000 households—nearly all of which are in the suburbs—do not have a vehicle and are not served by public transit of any kind.
10. The federal government spends \$82 billion dollars a year across more than 80 programs to address poverty in place. But the spread-out nature of suburban poverty, and the lack of expert public and non-profit service providers in suburbs, mean that most of those dollars remain focused on urban communities.