

Poverty in the San Diego Region



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Poverty in the San Diego Region

Fast Facts:

- 13 percent of **individuals** in San Diego County are living below the federal poverty level.
- Of the individuals living below poverty, 54 percent are females and 46 percent are males.
- The lower the level of educational attainment, the greater the proportion of people living in poverty.
- 9 percent of **families** in the San Diego region are living below the poverty level.
- Female-headed households living below the poverty level had a higher proportion of youth under the age of 18 living with them and had more people living in their household than married couples.
- 28 percent of families living below the poverty level reported receiving Supplemental Security Income and/or cash public assistance income.

Overview

Infos are published periodically to report information produced as part of the San Diego Association of Governments' (SANDAG) overall planning program, which includes population, housing, employment, land use, transportation, criminal justice, and other data, as well as occasional reports on other subjects of general interest. This report is financed with federal funds from the United States Department of Transportation, state funds from Caltrans, and local funds from SANDAG member jurisdictions.

As the state-designated Regional Census Data Center for the San Diego region, SANDAG is committed to providing current and relevant census information. Prepared in response to requests from partner agencies, community-based organizations and the public, this *Info* provides information about poverty in the San Diego region and its jurisdictions.

Background

The United States Census Bureau is primarily known for conducting the decennial census, used to determine the distribution of Congressional seats for each state. The Census Bureau also is the nation's leading source of data about its people and the economy, because the agency conducts a wide range of data collection efforts on an ongoing basis. Specific to poverty, Table 1 is a quick snapshot of the four Census Bureau studies conducted to determine poverty estimates.

**Table 1:
Data Sources for Poverty Information**

Questionnaire	Geographic Area	Used As
Current Population Survey, Annual Social Economic Supplement	National estimates	Main source for official national estimates
Survey of Income and Program Participation	National estimates (data for some larger states)	Only longitudinal data source for poverty
American Community Survey (ACS)	State and local estimates	Largest sample size, making it the best source for state and local poverty estimates
Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates	States, counties, and school districts	Uses ACS data for the administration of federal programs and allocation of federal funds to local jurisdictions

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013

Because the ACS five-year estimates are the most precise for smaller levels of geography (e.g., smaller cities such as Del Mar and La Mesa), these data are used through this *Info* to discuss poverty throughout the jurisdictions in the San Diego region.

Federal Poverty Measurements

The U.S. has two different measurements for federal poverty: poverty thresholds and poverty guidelines. The poverty thresholds are the original measure for federal poverty and are updated annually by the U.S. Census Bureau. This measurement is used for statistical purposes such as reporting estimates of the number of children living below the federal poverty level each year. The poverty guidelines are an annual simplified calculation of the poverty thresholds by the Department of Health and Human Services. These calculations are used for administrative purposes such as determining individuals or families that qualify for specific federal programs.

Table 2 shows the Census Bureau’s 2012 poverty thresholds, and the factors that are included in the computation of those thresholds are as follows:

- Annual household income before taxes is the basis
- Income is adjusted for inflation using the Consumer Price Index
- Household income data are for the 12 months prior to the date the respondent received the survey (rather than the last calendar year)
- If a household income is less than the threshold, then every individual in the family is determined to be living in poverty

**Table 2:
Poverty Thresholds (\$) for 2012 by Size of Family and
Number of Related Children under 18 years**

Size of Family Unit	Weighted Average Thresholds	Related children under 18 years								
		None	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six	Seven	Eight or More
One person (unrelated individual)...	11,720									
Under 65 years.....	11,945	11,945								
65 years and over.....	11,011	11,011								
Two people.....	14,937									
Householder under 65 years.....	15,450	15,374	15,825							
Householder 65 years and over....	13,892	13,878	15,765							
Three people.....	18,284	17,959	18,480	18,498						
Four people.....	23,492	23,681	24,069	23,283	23,364					
Five people.....	27,827	28,558	28,974	28,087	27,400	26,981				
Six people.....	31,471	32,847	32,978	32,298	31,647	30,678	30,104			
Seven people.....	35,743	37,795	38,031	37,217	36,651	35,594	34,362	33,009		
Eight people.....	39,688	42,271	42,644	41,876	41,204	40,249	39,038	37,777	37,457	
Nine people or more.....	47,297	50,849	51,095	50,416	49,845	48,908	47,620	46,454	46,165	44,387

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012

The Census Bureau also uses the ratio of income to poverty as another variation in measuring poverty. Individuals or families are classified as being in poverty if their income is less than the poverty threshold, as the following examples illustrate.

- If less than the actual threshold, they are below 100 percent of poverty which is the same as living in poverty.
- If less than 1.5 times the threshold, they are below 150 percent of poverty.
- If a family's income is less than twice the poverty threshold, the family is below 200 percent of poverty. The greater the ratio of income to poverty, the more individuals falls under the category because higher ratios include more people with higher incomes.

In another example, Family A has six members (father, mother, three children, and grandmother). Their total family income is \$32,000. To obtain the ratio of income to poverty, divide by the family's threshold listed in Table 2 for a family of six people with three children under 18 years of age as follows:

$$\text{Income/Threshold} = \$32,000 / \$31,647 = 1.01$$

Therefore, Family A is not living at 100 percent below the federal poverty level. However, Family A would be included when looking at families living at 150 and/or 200 percent below federal poverty level (FPL). Using the income to poverty ratio estimates how close a family's income is to their poverty threshold. These different levels are helpful when examining data for areas of the country with a higher cost of living, like the San Diego region, since cost of living expenses are not accounted for when the thresholds are computed.

Poverty Status for Individuals in the San Diego Region

The first half of this *Info* will look at demographic characteristics of individuals living at FPL and the second half will look at families living at FPL. The estimates of individuals living in poverty are inclusive of all individuals living alone and living in families. However, for the family estimates, a family is two or more people related by birth, marriage, or adoption, living in the same housing unit. As previously mentioned, the ACS five-year estimates are used in order to show differences within the jurisdictions in the region. Table 3 shows the ratio of individuals living at 100, 150, and 200 percent of FPL since many government assistance programs use the poverty cutoff for eligibility starting at 100 percent FPL and up to 200 percent FPL. Overall, 13 percent of those living in the County are living at 100 percent FPL, which is close to both California and the United States' proportion of 14 percent (not shown).

One research question of interest is how poverty rates compare over time, especially as related to the recession. However, this question cannot be answered using the ACS 5-year estimates because the current data (2007-2011) available includes the recession years (December 2007 to June 2009 according to the U.S. Bureau Labor of Statistics).

Table 3:
Ratio of Income to Poverty for Individuals within each Jurisdiction in San Diego County

	100 Percent of Federal Poverty Level	150 Percent of Federal Poverty Level	200 Percent of Federal Poverty Level
Carlsbad	8%	13%	18%
Chula Vista	10%	18%	28%
Coronado	6%	9%	12%
Del Mar	5%	6%	7%
El Cajon	32%	35%	49%
Encinitas	9%	13%	18%
Escondido	16%	29%	42%
Imperial Beach	21%	34%	44%
La Mesa	12%	20%	27%
Lemon Grove	18%	31%	39%
National City	22%	38%	52%
Oceanside	11%	20%	30%
Poway	5%	8%	12%
San Diego	15%	23%	25%
San Marcos	13%	23%	36%
Santee	8%	13%	20%
Solana Beach	8%	14%	20%
Vista	15%	27%	41%
COUNTY	13%	22%	30%
TOTAL	387,565	645,812	903,689

Note: Totals are individuals, where poverty status is determined in San Diego County

Source: 2011 ACS five-year estimates

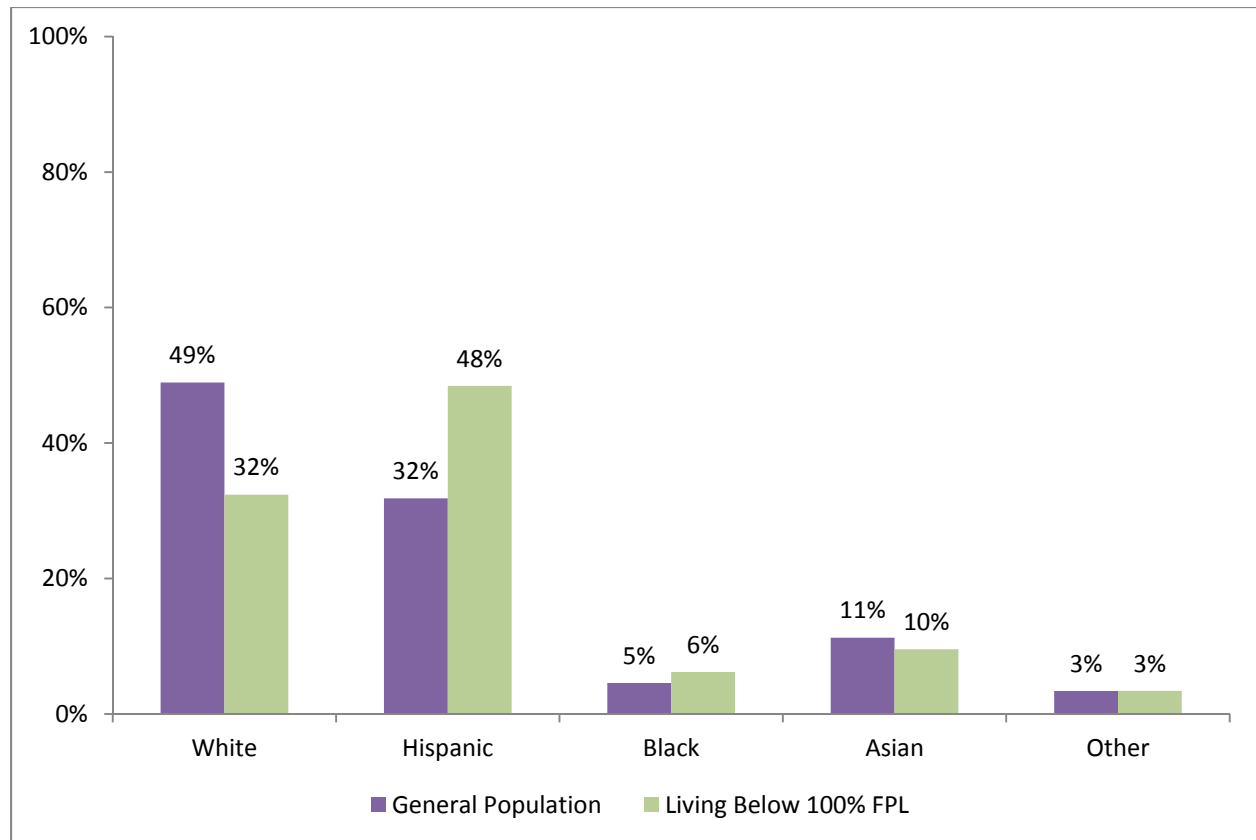
Demographic and Social Characteristics

Based on data collected from 2007 through 2011, there were 387,565 individuals living below the poverty level in the San Diego region. Of those individuals, 46 percent were male and 54 percent were female (not shown).

Race/Ethnicity

In terms of racial and ethnic origin, the Census Bureau follows the Office of Management and Budget's 1997 Revisions to the Standards for Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity. These federal guidelines require that race and Hispanic origin (ethnicity) be two separate questions when collecting these data. However, race and ethnicity have been collapsed for this *Info*. The data also are from the 2011 ACS five-year public micro-use sample (PUMS) because the Census Bureau has not released the Special Tabulations for the 2011 ACS five-year estimates. Figure 1 shows the race/ethnicity of individuals living in poverty compared to the overall representation in the region. For the Hispanic and Black population, the proportion of people living in poverty is higher than the proportion of the region's population they represent. The opposite is true for the White and Asian groups. With respect to place of birth, 50 percent of those living in poverty in San Diego County were born in California, 30 percent were foreign born, 18 percent were born in another state, and 1 percent were native born but outside the United States (not shown).

Figure 1:
Race/Ethnicity of Individuals Living in Poverty

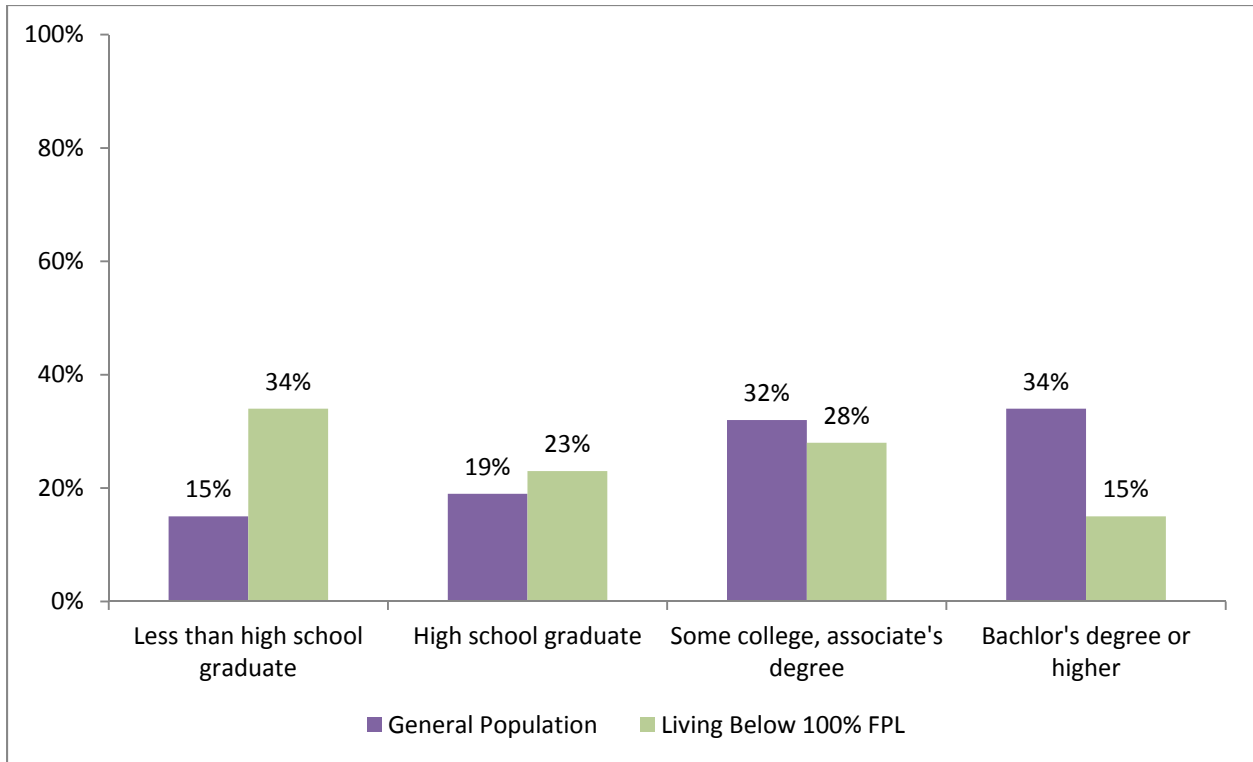


Source: 2011 ACS five-year PUMS

Educational Attainment

Figure 2 shows the educational attainment of individuals age 25 years and older living in poverty compared to the regional representation. As might be expected, the lower the level of educational attainment, the greater the proportion of people living in poverty.

**Figure 2:
Educational Attainment for Individuals Living In Poverty in San Diego County**



Source: 2011 ACS five-year estimates

Employment Status

When looking at the employment status of those who are in the civilian labor force and are 16 years and older, 93 percent of San Diego County residents are employed compared to 71 percent of those living below FPL. Additionally, 7 percent of San Diego County residents are unemployed compared to 29 percent of residents living below FPL.

Families Living in Poverty in the San Diego Region

Of the 704,879 families living in the San Diego region, nine percent live below the federal poverty level. This is different from the 13 percent of individuals living at FPL mentioned earlier since individuals living alone are not counted in the family estimates. Since the San Diego region has a higher cost of living than other counties in California, looking at a higher ratio of income for families living in poverty is of interest. As previously mentioned, several government assistance programs use various poverty cutoff eligibility such as the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) that uses the 150 percent FPL or the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Woman, Infant, and Children (WIC) where the poverty cut off is 100 to 185 percent depending on each state's discretion. Sixteen percent of families in the region are living at 150 percent of the FPL and 24 percent are living at 200 percent of the FPL.

Table 4:
Ratio of Income to Poverty for Families within each Jurisdiction in the San Diego Region

	100 Percent of Poverty Level	150 percent of Poverty Level	200 Percent of Poverty Level
Carlsbad	7%	11%	15%
Chula Vista	8%	16%	24%
Coronado	4%	7%	10%
Del Mar	5%	5%	5%
El Cajon	18%	29%	38%
Encinitas	6%	9%	14%
Escondido	12%	24%	35%
Imperial Beach	15%	25%	35%
La Mesa	9%	14%	20%
Lemon Grove	14%	23%	31%
National City	18%	33%	48%
Oceanside	8%	15%	23%
Poway	3%	5%	9%
San Diego	10%	17%	24%
San Marcos	9%	18%	28%
Santee	6%	10%	16%
Solana Beach	4%	10%	15%
Vista	11%	22%	34%
COUNTY	9%	16%	24%
TOTAL	64,675	115,219	168,055

Note: Totals are families, where poverty status is determined in San Diego County

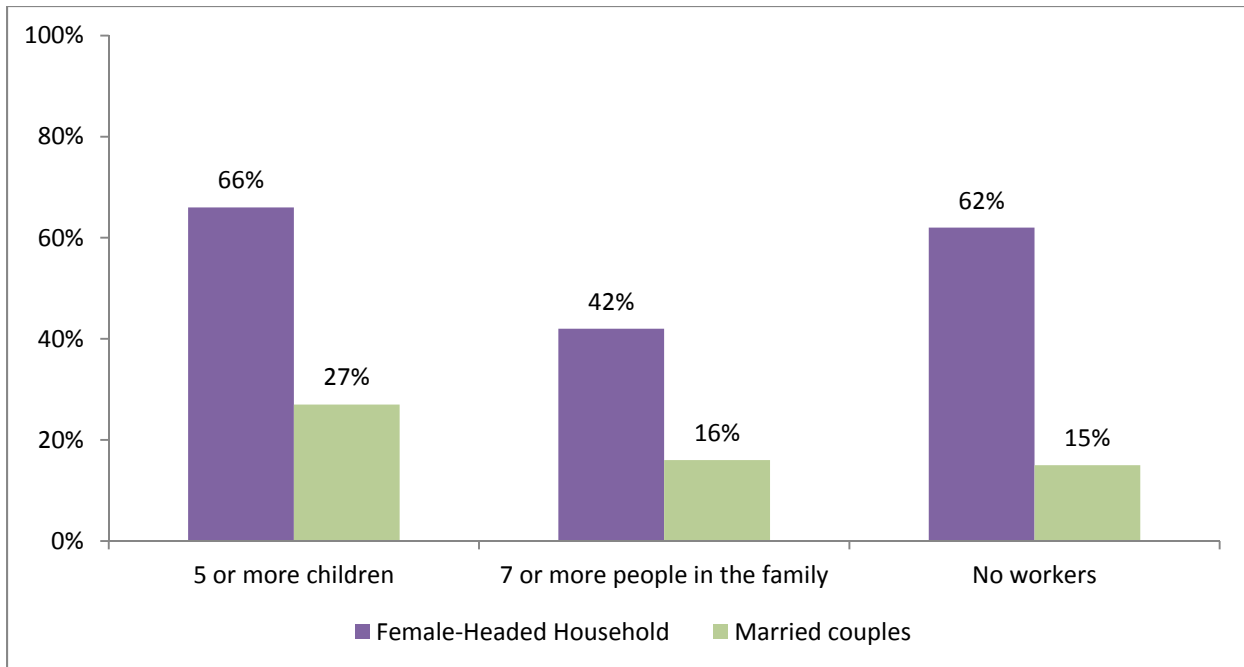
Source: 2011 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Family Structure

Fifty-two percent of families living in the San Diego region include related children under 18 years old. Fourteen percent of those families live at or below FPL and of those families 37 percent are grandparents who are living with and have responsibility for their own grandchildren under 18 years old.

The ACS also looks at the number of related children living in in the household (no child, 1 or 2 children, 3 or 4 children, and 5 or more children) and number of people living in the household (2 people, 3 or 4 people, 5 or 6 people, 7 or more people). When comparing female-headed households and married-couple families living below the poverty level, female-headed households have a higher percentage of five or more children under 18 in their household (66% versus 27%), seven or more people in their household (42% versus 16%), and no workers in the household (62% versus 15%) (Figure 3).

Figure 3:
Female-Headed Households and Married Couples Living in Poverty



Source: 2011 ACS five-year estimates

Public Assistance

When families were asked if they received any Supplemental Security Income and/or cash public assistance income in the past 12 months, 28 percent of families living in poverty said they had. Among families living below poverty, 43 percent of families with a female-headed household reported receiving public assistance. Families were also asked if anyone in the past 12 months received Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits (SNAP) (formerly known as food stamps), The survey found that 4 percent of households received SNAP benefits in San Diego County. Of those households receiving SNAP, 51 percent of them were living below poverty level.

SANDAG

SANDAG is the region's primary research and planning agency, providing the public forum for regional policy decisions about growth, transportation, transit planning and construction, environmental management, housing, open space, energy, public safety, and binational topics. SANDAG is composed of mayors, council members, and county supervisors from each of the region's 18 cities and county government:

Member Agencies:

City of Carlsbad • City of Chula Vista • City of Coronado • City of Del Mar •
City of El Cajon • City of Encinitas • City of Escondido • City of Imperial Beach •
City of La Mesa • City of Lemon Grove • City of National City •
City of Oceanside • City of Poway • City of San Diego • City of San Marcos •
City of Santee • City of Solana Beach • City of Vista • County of San Diego

Advisory Agencies:

Imperial County • California Department of Transportation • Mexico •
Metropolitan Transit System • North County Transit District •
United States Department of Defense • San Diego Unified Port District •
San Diego County Water Authority • Southern California Tribal Chairmen's Association

The Regional Information System

The SANDAG Regional Information System contains a comprehensive collection of historic, current, and forecasted information. We continuously update these datasets that contain demographic, economic, land use, transportation, criminal justice, and environmental information. Much of this information can be obtained at: www.sandag.org.

Formatted data reports and raw data can be extracted from the Profile Warehouse and the Data Warehouse. The site also provides access to several mapping applications.

The Service Bureau

The SANDAG Service Bureau is the consulting arm of SANDAG providing informational and technical services to member agencies, nonmember government agencies, and private organizations and individuals. Customized data, reports, and maps are available through the SANDAG Service Bureau. For information, please call us at (619) 699-1900 or visit us at: sandag.org/servicebureau.