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Child Poverty

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Child poverty (those under 18) in Missouri has increased from 14.8 percent to 18.4 percent of all children. In 2007, there were over a quarter of a million Missouri children living in poverty. Sadly, there are at least 50,000 more poor children in Missouri than there were in 2000!

The highest proportion of Missouri persons living in families below the poverty level continues to be children (see this [report](#) for an analysis of 2000 census data). According to 2007 Census estimates released by the Small Area Estimates Branch, the proportion of children below poverty in Missouri was 18.4 percent. This compares to 13.3 percent for persons of all ages.

The U.S. Census Bureau, with support from other Federal agencies, created the Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) program to provide more current estimates of selected income and poverty statistics than those available from the 2000 decennial census. [Estimates are created for states, counties, and school districts.](#) The main objective of this program is to provide updated estimates of income and poverty statistics for the administration of federal programs and the allocation of federal funds to local jurisdictions.

Beginning in 2005, SAIPE estimates are based on data gathered by the American Community Survey (ACS) unlike previous post-census estimates which were based on the 2000 decennial census. In [a paper presented to the](#)

[American Statistical Association](#), Posey et al. note that:

“The long-term goal of the ACS is to produce more timely local area estimates. Currently the only sources of Census Bureau local area income estimates are the decennial census (data only once every ten years) and the Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) program. The biggest difference between collection methods in the ACS and Census 2000 is the income reference period. The ACS collects data throughout the year on an on-going, monthly basis. The census, however, collected the income data for a fixed period of time – “during 1999” (the last calendar year)” (Posey, Welniak & Nelson, 2003, 2).

Therefore, there are differences between poverty data from the Census 2000 and the SAIPE 2000 estimates. Data presented in this article are from the 2000 and 2007 SAIPE estimates as the Census Bureau recommends, for consistency, using one source or the other.

What is the Federal Poverty Level?

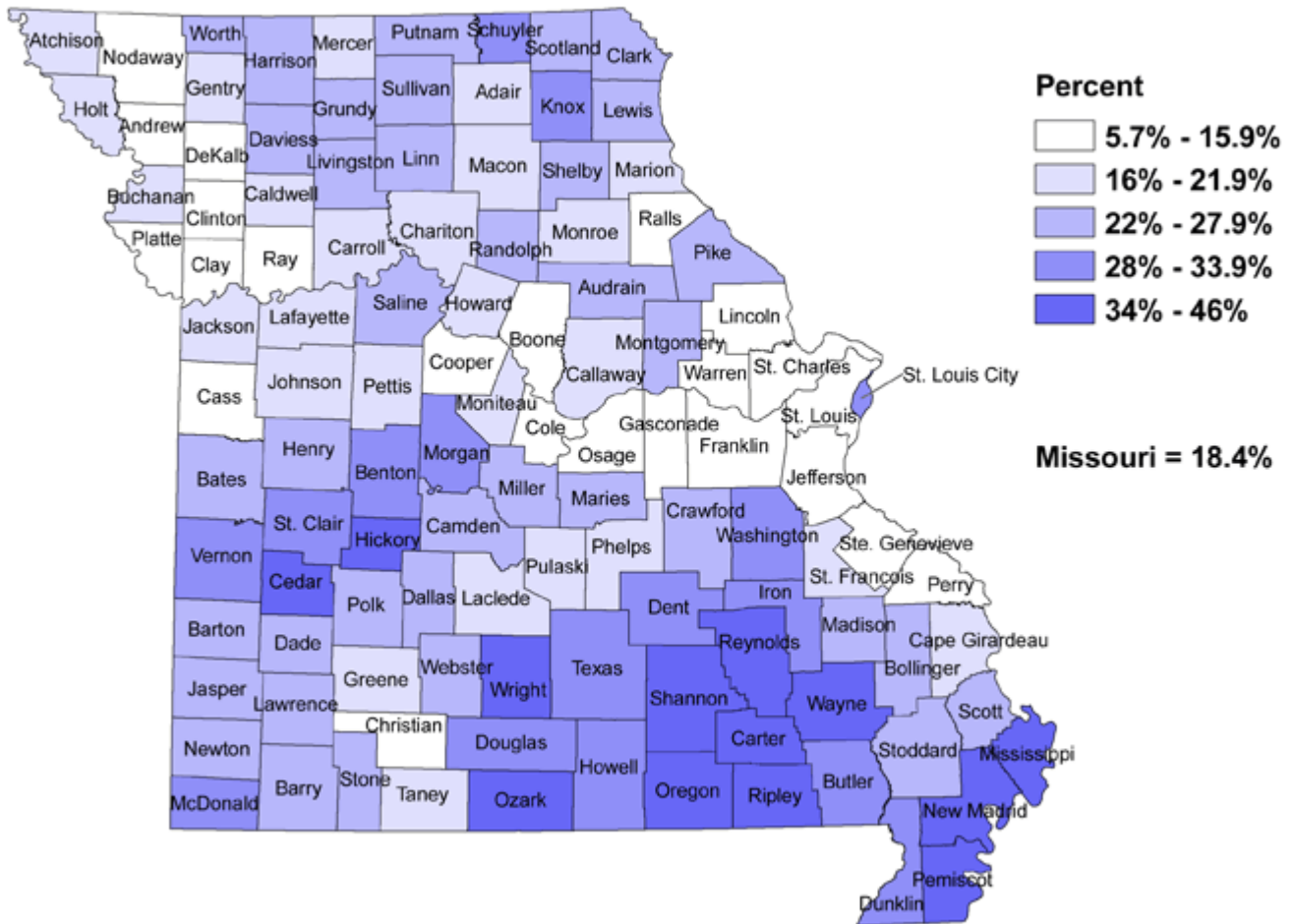
Families and unrelated individuals are classified as being above or below the poverty level using the poverty index originated at the Social Security Administration in 1964 and revised by Federal Interagency Committees in 1969 and 1980. The poverty index is based solely on money income and does not reflect non-cash benefits such as food stamps, Medicaid, public housing, etc. received by many low-income households. Whether the income of a family or household is above or below the poverty level depends on income and the number of persons in the household. The poverty thresholds, derived from the food buying habits of families in the 1950s, are updated every year to reflect changes in the Consumer Price Index.

In 2007, the poverty threshold for a family of two adults and two children was \$21,027.

Variations in Child Poverty Rates

While 18.4 percent of children were considered below poverty in 2007, this continues to vary widely across counties in the state. Rates ranged from a low of 5.7 percent in St. Charles County to a high of 46 percent in Pemiscot County (see **Table 1**). As the map below illustrates, the Southeast, South Central and Bootheel regions continue to have the highest child poverty rates.

Percent of Children Under 18 Below Poverty by County, 2007



Source: USDC, Bureau of the Census, SAIGE, 2009
 Prepared By: University of Missouri Extension, Office of Social and Economic Data Analysis (OSED)
 Generated On: 20 May 2009

Table 1. Persons Below poverty, 2000-2007

Areaname	=====2000=====				=====2007=====				Change Pct. Poor Under 18
	Total Poor	Percent	Poor Under 18	Percent	Total Poor	Percent	Poor Under 18	Percent	
Missouri	581,207	10.6	206,913	14.8	758,844	13.3	257,404	18.4	3.6
Adair County	3,206	14.4	712	15.6	5,382	24.6	973	21.8	6.2
Andrew County	1,288	7.8	439	10.4	1,390	8.4	444	11.3	0.9
Atchison County	648	10.6	205	15.3	814	14.0	224	19.4	4.1
Audrain County	2,961	12.5	1,198	19.6	4,458	19.1	1,639	27.1	7.5
Barry County	4,940	14.5	1,945	22.5	6,182	17.3	2,479	27.2	4.7
Barton County	1,547	12.3	552	16.6	2,144	17.2	733	23.4	6.8
Bates County	2,176	13.2	832	19.3	2,660	15.9	902	22.6	3.3
Benton County	2,697	15.7	857	25.2	3,380	18.6	1,086	31.6	6.4
Bollinger County	1,679	13.8	586	19.0	1,895	15.8	618	22.4	3.4
Boone County	13,147	10.2	3,437	11.2	22,963	16.0	5,026	15.0	3.8
Buchanan County	9,800	12.0	3,138	15.5	12,464	15.2	4,025	20.2	4.7
Butler County	6,799	17.0	2,426	25.3	7,582	18.7	2,803	29.3	4.0
Caldwell County	1,031	11.5	377	15.7	1,325	14.5	462	19.9	4.2
Callaway County	3,592	9.6	1,285	12.8	4,938	12.4	1,585	16.2	3.4
Camden County	4,205	11.3	1,417	19.6	5,391	13.5	1,883	24.2	4.6
Cape Girardeau County	6,452	9.7	2,014	12.8	8,885	12.8	2,673	16.8	4.0
Carroll County	1,278	12.6	458	18.1	1,541	16.0	474	21.3	3.2
Carter County	1,246	21.2	464	32.4	1,392	23.7	542	38.9	6.5
Cass County	4,980	5.9	1,897	8.2	7,228	7.5	2,579	10.2	2.0
Cedar County	2,192	16.2	791	24.9	2,671	20.0	1,047	35.0	10.1
Chariton County	840	10.3	239	12.9	1,029	13.5	264	17.0	4.1
Christian County	4,729	8.3	1,856	12.1	7,550	10.4	2,871	15.3	3.2
Clark County	918	12.5	335	18.8	1,004	14.2	375	23.2	4.4
Clay County	9,589	5.1	3,334	7.0	14,740	7.1	4,962	9.2	2.2
Clinton County	1,545	8.1	544	10.9	1,895	9.3	649	13.1	2.2
Cole County	4,908	7.4	1,582	9.4	7,481	10.9	2,295	13.6	4.2
Cooper County	1,608	10.9	518	14.0	1,964	12.7	589	15.9	1.9
Crawford County	3,388	15.0	1,251	21.7	4,309	18.2	1,529	26.3	4.6
Dade County	984	12.6	343	18.6	1,214	16.4	419	25.3	6.7
Dallas County	2,484	15.8	992	23.6	2,543	15.3	1,099	26.7	3.1
Daviess County	1,143	14.4	502	24.2	1,304	16.6	533	25.8	1.6
DeKalb County	1,194	13.5	289	12.5	1,387	16.0	315	14.9	2.4
Dent County	2,429	16.4	827	23.1	2,866	19.4	986	29.6	6.5
Douglas County	2,419	18.4	841	26.1	2,574	19.4	933	31.3	5.2
Dunklin County	6,712	20.7	2,533	30.5	6,717	21.8	2,669	33.7	3.2
Franklin County	6,526	6.9	2,341	9.4	9,353	9.5	3,081	12.6	3.2
Gasconade County	1,402	9.2	467	12.8	1,712	11.4	536	15.9	3.1
Gentry County	719	10.8	253	14.7	740	12.1	268	18.3	3.6
Greene County	25,353	10.9	7,797	14.9	34,572	13.7	10,983	19.3	4.4
Grundy County	1,353	13.4	467	20.2	1,737	17.8	578	25.9	5.7
Harrison County	1,181	13.8	396	19.9	1,508	17.5	525	26.6	6.7
Henry County	2,864	13.0	995	19.3	3,709	16.8	1,157	23.6	4.3
Hickory County	1,564	17.6	494	28.9	1,716	19.1	562	34.7	5.8
Holt County	590	11.4	198	16.8	705	14.6	209	20.8	4.0
Howard County	1,177	12.4	385	16.5	1,466	16.0	439	21.1	4.6
Howell County	6,231	17.0	2,379	25.4	7,844	20.7	2,930	31.9	6.5
Iron County	1,783	17.3	654	26.0	1,959	20.2	728	31.5	5.5
Jackson County	64,252	9.9	24,339	14.7	98,407	15.0	35,300	21.2	6.5

Table 1. (cont'd) Persons Below poverty, 2000-2007

Arenaname	=====2000=====				=====2007=====				Change Pct. Poor Under 18
	Total		Poor		Total		Poor		
	Poor	Percent	Under 18	Percent	Poor	Percent	Under 18	Percent	
Jasper County	13,532	13.0	4,955	18.7	18,901	16.8	6,706	23.0	4.3
Jefferson County	13,285	6.6	4,888	9.1	19,526	9.1	6,526	12.2	3.1
Johnson County	4,889	10.6	1,642	13.6	7,368	15.2	2,017	16.5	2.9
Knox County	664	15.6	264	25.6	704	17.7	267	29.1	3.5
Laclede County	4,319	13.3	1,563	18.6	5,135	14.7	1,853	21.5	2.9
Lafayette County	2,899	9.0	1,040	12.5	4,146	13.1	1,336	17.6	5.1
Lawrence County	4,611	13.2	1,790	19.2	6,725	18.3	2,431	25.7	6.5
Lewis County	1,298	13.4	503	19.9	1,632	17.6	565	25.6	5.7
Lincoln County	3,449	8.5	1,304	11.2	4,768	9.4	1,781	13.1	1.9
Linn County	1,684	12.5	606	18.2	2,144	17.3	682	23.1	4.9
Livingston County	1,607	11.8	533	15.8	2,322	17.6	730	23.7	7.9
McDonald County	3,637	16.8	1,529	25.3	4,302	19.0	1,819	29.0	3.7
Macon County	1,850	12.1	650	17.7	2,056	13.5	710	20.2	2.5
Madison County	1,798	15.5	627	22.2	1,969	16.5	721	26.2	4.0
Maries County	1,163	13.4	414	19.0	1,386	15.4	469	23.0	4.0
Marion County	3,238	11.9	1,088	15.5	3,743	13.8	1,234	18.0	2.5
Mercer County	466	12.6	140	16.8	529	15.3	154	20.3	3.5
Miller County	3,222	13.6	1,200	20.0	3,842	15.7	1,409	23.9	3.9
Mississippi County	2,726	21.1	1,039	30.8	3,623	28.6	1,289	40.3	9.5
Moniteau County	1,352	9.9	521	13.9	1,818	13.2	662	18.3	4.4
Monroe County	1,025	11.2	384	16.6	1,239	13.8	415	19.3	2.7
Montgomery County	1,363	11.5	490	16.8	1,711	14.8	601	22.2	5.4
Morgan County	2,912	15.0	1,166	25.8	3,774	18.3	1,457	30.8	5.0
New Madrid County	3,484	18.1	1,309	26.2	4,558	26.3	1,581	37.5	11.3
Newton County	6,172	11.9	2,253	16.8	9,215	16.8	3,396	25.1	8.3
Nodaway County	1,973	10.3	406	10.0	3,253	16.8	516	13.4	3.4
Oregon County	2,139	21.0	754	31.5	2,535	25.0	829	36.9	5.4
Osage County	946	7.3	301	9.1	1,338	10.2	389	12.1	3.0
Ozark County	1,879	20.0	624	31.5	2,006	22.0	725	38.6	7.1
Pemiscot County	4,605	23.4	1,996	34.0	5,757	31.2	2,480	46.0	12.0
Perry County	1,495	8.4	491	10.7	1,942	10.5	612	13.6	2.9
Pettis County	4,675	12.0	1,775	17.6	5,331	13.3	2,119	20.8	3.2
Phelps County	5,333	14.1	1,730	19.3	6,618	16.5	1,828	20.0	0.7
Pike County	2,380	14.6	827	20.0	2,964	18.2	924	23.4	3.4
Platte County	3,161	4.2	1,042	5.5	5,169	6.2	1,633	8.0	2.5
Polk County	3,792	14.7	1,381	20.4	4,966	17.3	1,684	23.9	3.5
Pulaski County	4,332	11.8	1,609	14.2	5,066	13.9	1,884	16.6	2.4
Putnam County	780	15.0	270	22.2	902	18.6	287	26.3	4.1
Ralls County	823	8.6	264	11.4	1,050	10.8	288	13.9	2.5
Randolph County	2,922	13.0	942	16.4	3,926	16.9	1,410	24.0	7.6
Ray County	1,754	7.5	637	10.2	2,086	9.0	709	12.4	2.2
Reynolds County	1,308	20.1	438	30.3	1,402	22.1	460	35.0	4.7
Ripley County	2,718	20.5	924	29.0	3,191	23.9	1,128	35.9	6.9
St. Charles County	11,967	4.1	4,095	5.0	15,763	4.6	5,101	5.7	0.7
St. Clair County	1,614	17.0	532	25.3	1,995	21.7	628	32.3	7.0
Ste. Genevieve County	1,458	8.2	505	11.1	1,992	11.4	593	15.0	3.9
St. Francois County	7,328	14.0	2,482	19.2	9,217	16.4	2,880	21.5	2.3
St. Louis County	68,935	6.9	23,222	9.3	84,212	8.6	26,865	11.7	2.4
Saline County	2,676	12.2	939	17.5	3,618	17.1	1,210	23.8	6.3
Schuyler County	611	14.8	220	22.2	748	18.5	257	29.4	7.2

Table 1. (cont'd) Persons Below poverty, 2000-2007

Areaname	=====2000=====				=====2007=====				Change Pct. Poor Under 18
	Total		Poor		Total		Poor		
	Poor	Percent	Under 18	Percent	Poor	Percent	Under 18	Percent	
Scotland County	755	15.5	331	24.2	831	17.8	291	23.7	-0.5
Scott County	5,893	14.7	2,344	21.9	6,493	16.2	2,352	22.9	1.0
Shannon County	1,994	24.0	748	34.9	2,150	25.8	791	40.6	5.7
Shelby County	919	13.8	338	20.3	1,043	16.4	356	23.6	3.3
Stoddard County	4,253	14.5	1,476	21.5	5,606	19.2	1,629	24.9	3.4
Stone County	3,631	12.6	1,317	22.0	4,525	14.5	1,590	25.0	3.0
Sullivan County	1,068	15.0	370	20.7	1,215	18.6	409	24.6	3.9
Taney County	4,992	12.9	1,849	21.1	5,719	13.0	2,165	21.2	0.1
Texas County	4,420	19.4	1,546	27.9	4,838	21.1	1,675	32.0	4.1
Vernon County	2,876	14.8	1,086	21.4	3,582	18.9	1,329	28.2	6.8
Warren County	2,025	8.0	734	11.1	2,923	9.7	990	13.1	2.0
Washington County	4,340	19.4	1,547	25.9	4,998	21.7	1,798	31.2	5.3
Wayne County	2,851	21.8	952	32.6	2,935	23.5	960	37.4	4.8
Webster County	4,397	14.1	2,031	22.6	5,863	16.8	2,540	26.8	4.2
Worth County	333	14.5	112	20.3	344	16.7	99	24.6	4.3
Wright County	3,390	19.1	1,322	28.2	4,455	24.8	1,771	39.0	10.8
St. Louis City	69,077	20.6	26,327	30.7	78,451	23.0	28,427	33.0	2.3

Source: U. S. Bureau of the Census, Small Area Income & Poverty Estimates Branch.

Reference

Posey, K. G., Welniak, E. & Nelson, C. (2003). Income in the American Community Survey: Comparisons to Census 2000. Retrieved March 26, 2009 from http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/ACS/ASA_nelson.pdf.

Resources

National Center for Children in Poverty, Missouri State Profiles
http://www.nccp.org/profiles/state_profile.php?state=MO&id=6
http://www.nccp.org/profiles/state_profile.php?state=MO&id=7

Child Trends Brief: Children in Poverty: Trends, Consequences, and Policy Options
http://www.childtrends.org/Files//Child_Trends-2009_04_07_RB_ChildreninPoverty.pdf