

Poverty in the U.S. and in West Virginia

To combat poverty in our state, the Catholic Conference of WV supports policies that would:

- encourage education as the best means of escaping poverty by providing workable options
- make quality child care available in every county
- encourage employers to consider on-site child care through grants and other incentives
- explore options for aiding people in obtaining reliable transportation to work
- create jobs with just wages and benefits

For further study of the problem, see <http://www.catholicconferencewv.org/WelfareReform.htm> & www.catholiccharitiesusa.org

The Facts:

37.3 million Americans live below the official federal poverty level, which was \$20,614 for a family of four in 2007.¹ In the U.S., 1 in 8 people live in poverty; in **West Virginia** 1 in 6 people live in poverty (over 306,000 people). In the U.S., 1 in 6 children live in poverty; in West Virginia, 1 in 4 children. **West Virginia** is the sixth most poverty-stricken state in the union.

The number of people who are poor by the official government standards is more than to the combined populations of Iowa, Connecticut, Oklahoma, Oregon, Kentucky, Louisiana, South Carolina, Alabama, Colorado, New Hampshire and Idaho.

Almost half of all Americans will have experienced poverty for a year or more at some point in their lives by the time they reach age 60.²

Catholic Charities agencies serve one in every 10 people living in poverty. **Catholic Charities West Virginia** served 73,563 persons in 2006. (see www.catholiccharitieswv.org)

Employment

The current minimum wage in **West Virginia** for covered nonexempt employees is \$7.25 per hour. The **West Virginia** unemployment rate in August 2008 was 4.1%.²

Racial Inequality

The poverty rate for non-Hispanic whites is 8.2 percent, while the rate for Hispanics is 21.5 percent, the rate for Asians is 10.2 percent, and the rate for African Americans is 24.5 percent.¹

Housing

West Virginia boasts one of the highest percentages of homeowners. From 2000-2004 approximately 8 out of 10 West Virginians owned their own homes.³ That's above the national average of fewer than 7 out of ten. Yet the median value of West Virginians' homes (around \$81,000) is the third lowest in the nation.⁴

¹ <http://www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=1149>

² <http://www.bls.gov/LAU/>

³ <http://www.hud.gov>

⁴ <http://www.census.gov>