

What is Poverty?

For most Americans, the word poverty suggests destitution, an inability to provide a family with nutritious food, adequate clothing, and reasonable shelter. But only a small fraction of the 36 million persons classified as “poor” by the Census Bureau fit such a description.



- The typical American defined as poor by the government has a car, air conditioning, a refrigerator, a stove, a clothes washer and dryer, and a microwave.
- He has two color televisions, cable or satellite TV reception, a VCR or DVD player, and a stereo.
- He is able to obtain medical care.
- His home is in good repair and is not overcrowded.
- By his own report, his family is not hungry and he had sufficient funds in the past year to meet his family’s needs.



Consumer Goods

Housing

Nutrition and Anthropometry

Food Intake and Hunger

Difficulties and Material Problems

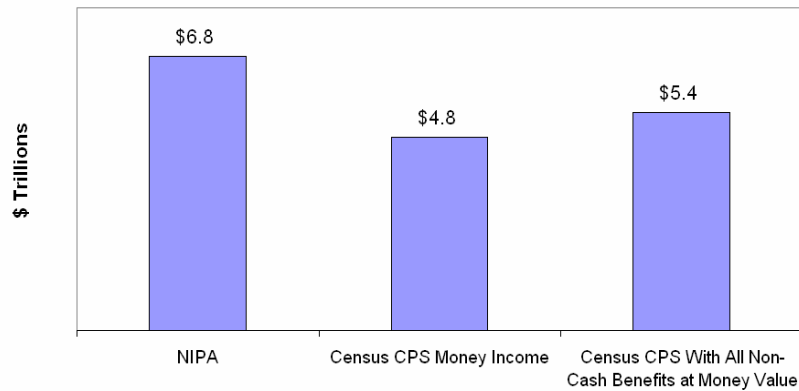


Problems with Current CPS Poverty Measure

- Undercounts income
- Official measure ignores in-kind benefits
- Ignores assets
- Even if income is below poverty thresholds, the household does not necessarily experience deprivations

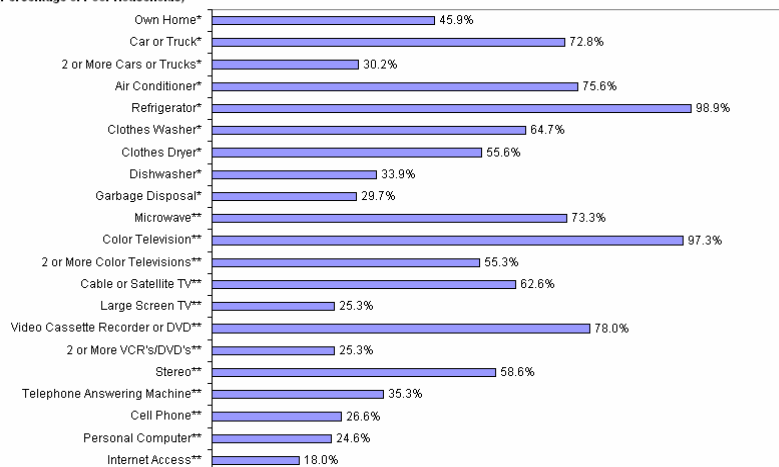


**Total Personal Income
National Income and Product Accounts
Compared to Census Income Figures
1996**



Ownership of Property and Consumer Goods Among Poor Households

(Percentage of Poor Households)



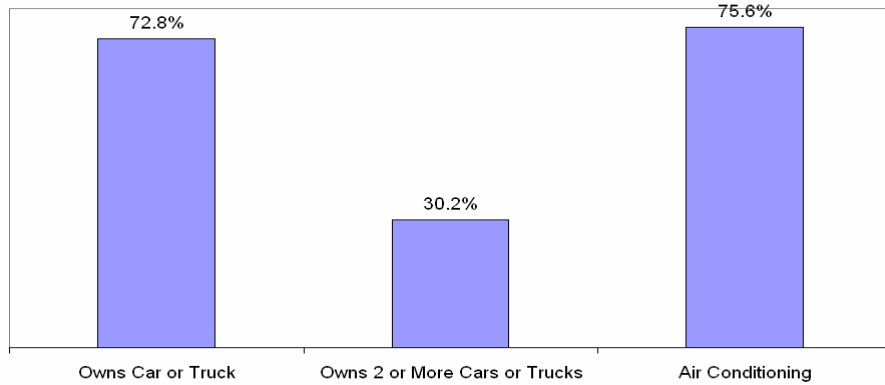
*Figures from American Housing Survey 2001

**Figures from U.S. Department of Energy, Housing Characteristics 2001

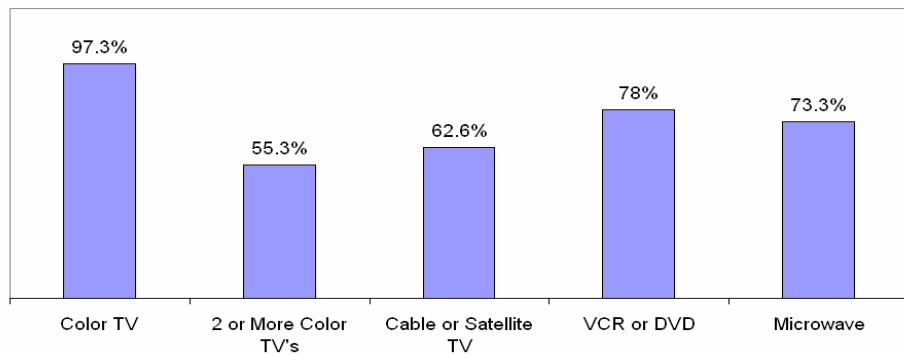
Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, American Housing Survey for the United States in 2001, Current Housing Reports H5000; U.S. Department of Energy, Energy Information Administration, Housing Characteristics 2001.



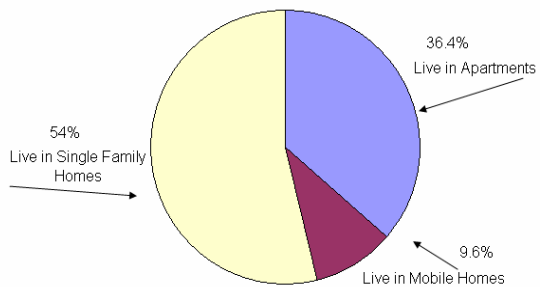
Ownership of Consumer Goods Among Poor Households



Ownership of Consumer Goods Among Poor Households



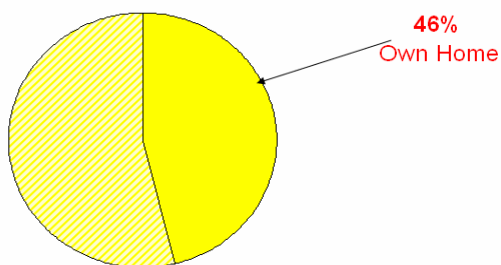
Housing of Poor Households



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, American Housing Survey for the United States, 2001

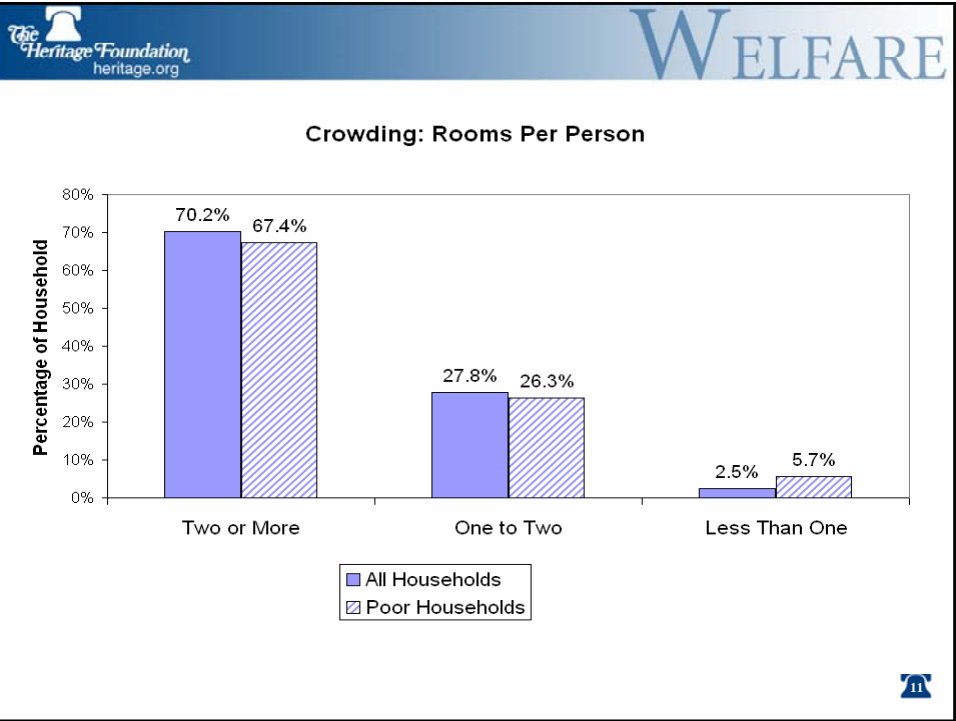


Housing of Poor Households



Some 46 percent of poor households own their own home. The typical home owned by the poor is a three-bedroom house with one-and-a-half baths. It has a garage or carport and a porch or patio and is located on a half-acre lot. The house was constructed in 1967 and is in good repair. The median value of homes owned by poor households was \$86,600 in 2001 or 70 percent of the median value of all homes owned in the United States.





The Heritage Foundation
heritage.org

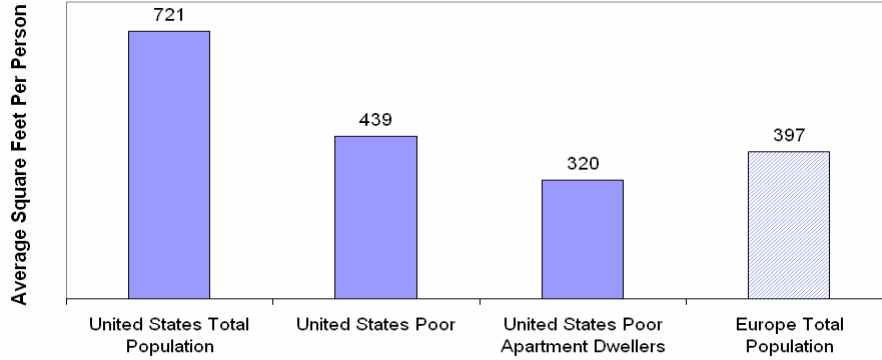
WELFARE

Poor Households: Bedrooms Per Person

Two Bedrooms for One Person	27%
At Least One Bedroom for One Person	43%
Two Bedrooms for Three Persons	11%
Less Than Two Bedrooms for Three Persons	19%

12

Housing Space: Average Square Feet Per Person

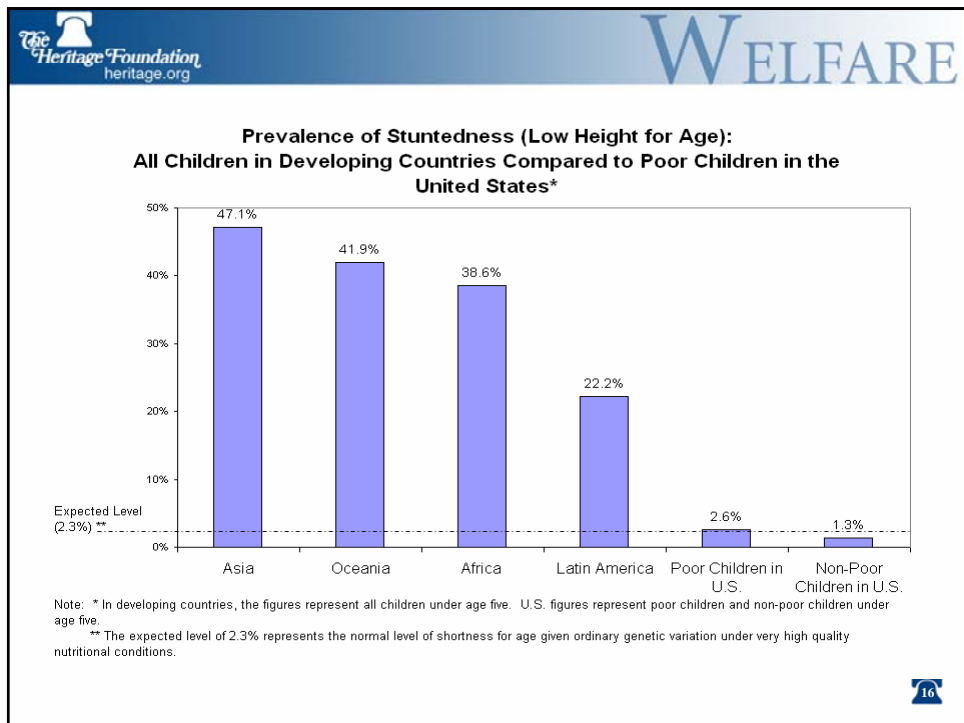
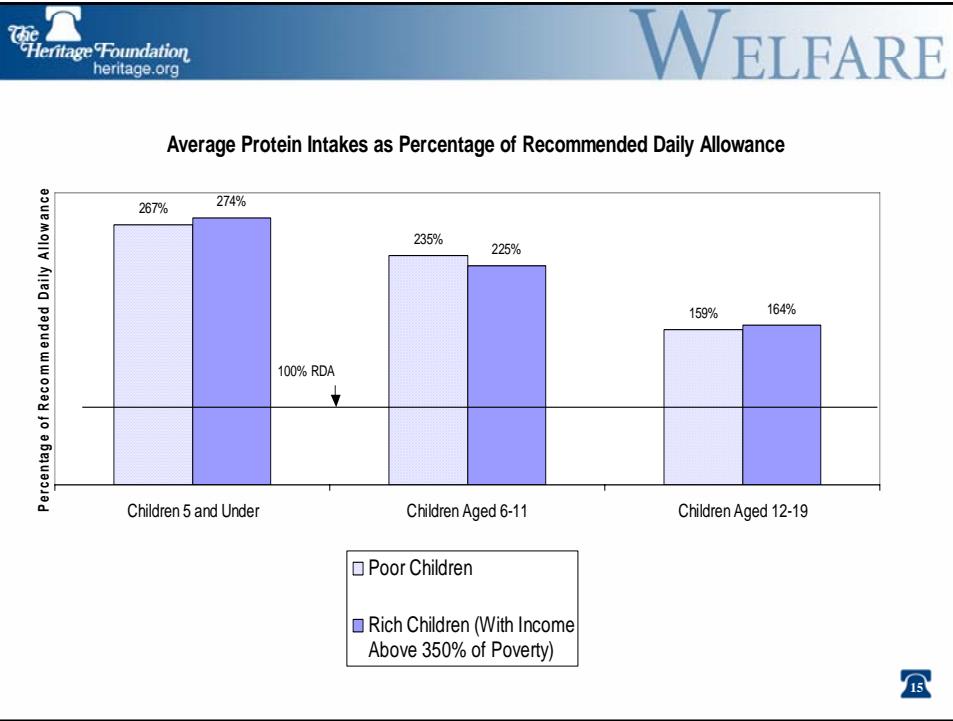


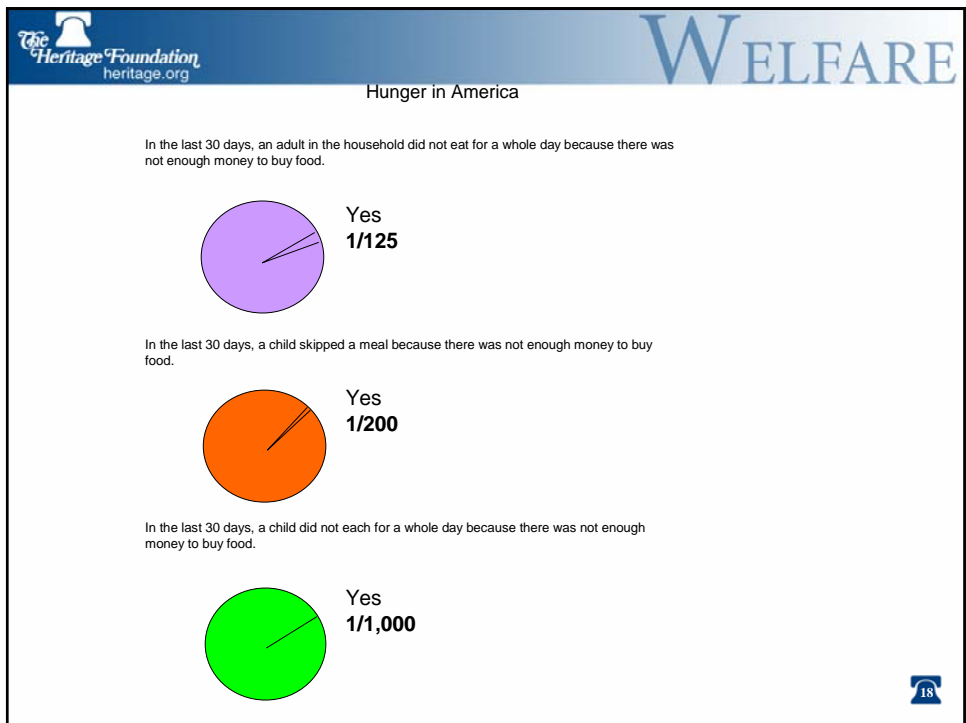
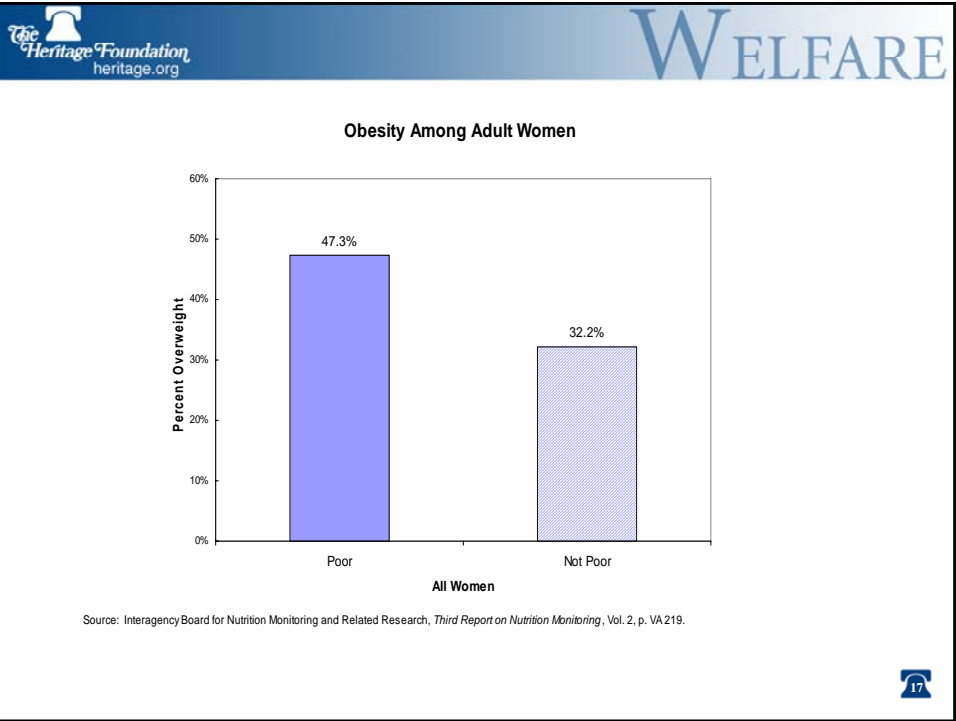
Physical Upkeep Problems in Houses or Apartments

% With Problem	% With Problem	
	All Households	Poor Households
1) Leaking Roof or Ceiling	6.9%	10.5%
2) Broken Window Glass or Windows That Cannot Shut	4.1%	7.9%
3) Electrical Wires Running on Outside of Wall in Finished Areas of Home	0.8%	1.9%
4) Toilet, Hot Water Heater, or Other Plumbing That Does Not Work	2.6%	4.5%
5) Holes in Walls or Ceiling or Cracks Wider Than Edge of a Dime	4.0%	7.1%
6) Holes in Floor Big Enough for Someone to Catch Their Foot On	0.9%	2.1%

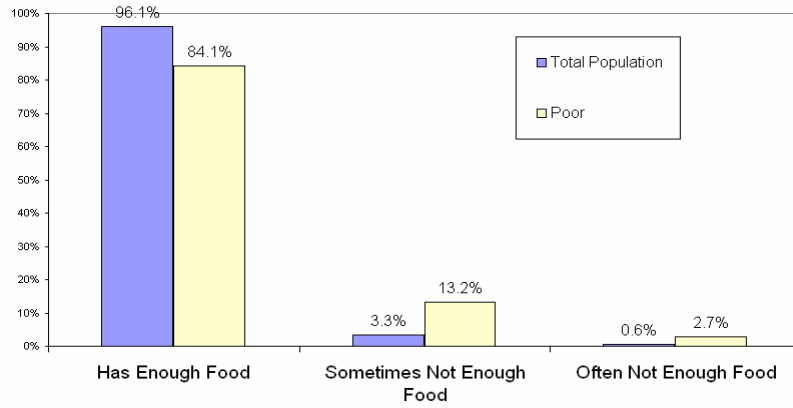
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, Adult Well-Being Topical Module, 1998





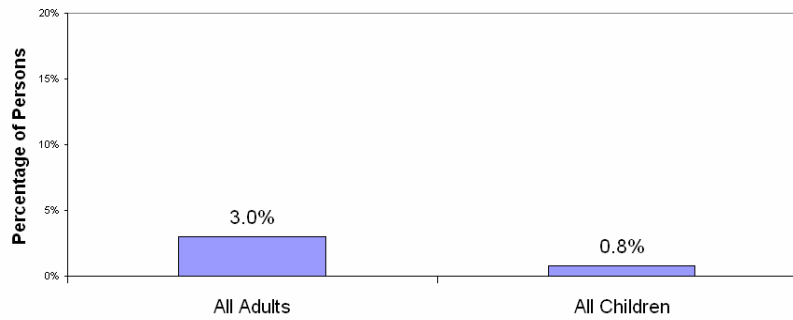


Self-Reported Food Sufficiency Among Americans

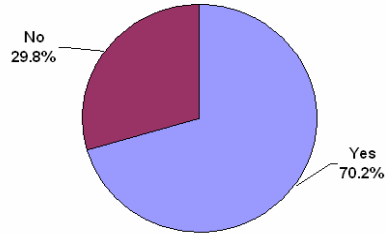


Source: Department of Health and Human Services, *Third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 1988-91*; cited in the USDA *Third Report on Nutrition Monitoring in the United States, Vol. 2, p. VA95.*

**Hunger:
Persons Who Are Food Insecure
With Hunger**



Percent of Poor Households Which Were Able to Meet All Essential Expenses During Last Year*



*Percentage of Poor Households That Report Being Able to Meet Essential Household Expenses Such As Mortgage or Rent, Utility Bills and Important Medical Care

Source: U.S. Bureau of The Census; Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1998

Material Problems in U.S. Population

	% of all persons
Crowding (more that one person per room)	6.3%
Three or more housing upkeep problems	4.3%
Had phone disconnected due to non-payment	4.2%
Lacks medical insurance and someone in family needed to go to the doctor but did not go	3.0%
Gas, electricity, or oil cut off	2.4%
Sometimes not enough food to eat	1.9%
Lacks refrigerator	0.8%
Lacks stove	0.7%
Often not enough food to eat	0.5%
Evicted for non-payment	0.5%

Total Number of Problems in Household

Has one problem	11.5%
Has two problems	3.5%
Has three or more problems	1.8%