

Report: Poverty soaring

Overall rate climbs with kids' figures more than doubled

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The nation's poverty rate rose last year and among children it more than doubled from 2021 to 2022 as pandemic-era benefits that kept many families afloat expired, the U.S. Census Bureau reported Tuesday.

While the 2022 official poverty rate for the nation of 11.5% — or 37.9 million people — was not statistically different from the year before, the supplemental poverty measure, which uses more comprehensive calculations of people's earnings and costs, showed the real impact of the end of those federal benefits, census figures show.

The Census Bureau, in a statement, attributed the increase to "changes in tax policy, including the expiration of temporary expansions to the Child Tax Credit and the Earned Income Tax Credit as well as the end of pandemic-era stimulus payments."

Sanford Schram, adjunct lecturer in political science at Stony Brook University and an emeritus professor at the City University of New York, said the census data "shows you

that the child tax credit was a very effective antipoverty measure. It was highly targeted on the lower income brackets and it lifted a lot of children out of poverty. And it's gone, unfortunately. Now we're back to a weakened approach. That's the overwhelming factor in explaining these statistics."

The bureau also reported that more people were covered by health insurance in 2022, at 92.1%, or 304 million, than in 2021, when 91.7%, or 300.9 million people, had coverage.

Real median household income, which is adjusted for inflation, for the nation also declined by 2.3% between 2021 and 2022 — dropping to \$74,580 in 2022, down from \$76,330 the year before.

But it was the change in the supplemental poverty measure that was most notable — the first such rise since 2010. The supplemental poverty measure rate rose to 12.4% in 2022, up from the 7.8% in 2021, bureau officials said during an online news conference, and was even higher than the pre-pandemic rate of 11.8% in 2019.

Child poverty, according to the supplemental poverty measure, more than doubled in the one year-period, going from 5.2% in 2021 to 12.4% a year later, the bureau said.

A national child welfare organization and Long Island officials lamented the loss in government aid that had helped

PANDEMIC IMPACT

The U.S. Census Bureau released data on several measures. Poverty rates are supplemental, based on more comprehensive calculations.

	2021	2022
National poverty rate	7.8%	12.4%
National child poverty rate	5.2%	12.4%
Real median household income*	\$76,330	\$74,580
Health insurance coverage	91.7%	92.1%

* Adjusted for inflation

SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

families during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Honestly our commission has been waiting for the boom to fall," said Richard Koubek, chair of the Suffolk County Legislature's Welfare to Work Commission. He said the COVID-era benefits had particularly helped reduce child poverty. He said the census data showed how phasing out those tax credits and payments had hurt families.

Citing the commission's December report on Long Island poverty, Koubek said, "What we found was it takes \$100,000 for a family of four to pay their bills on Long Island. Let's not get into how the federal poverty line is irrelevant in a high cost region like Long Island," Koubek said of the 2022

federal poverty threshold for a family of two adults and two children that was \$29,678.

"It's like play money.

"However, even with all of that pain, the COVID supplements reduced the pain . . . People who were squeaking by a little better with the COVID monies they're now going to slip back," Koubek said. "When child care subsidy increases go away, you're going to see people again who earn \$50,000, \$60,000 a year, not poor by federal standards, scraping by to put kids in child care."

The official poverty measure factors in wages and other earnings before taxes and doesn't consider regional cost differences or any expenses people have.

By contrast, the supplement-

tal poverty measure factors in regional cost differences and uses various sources of income, including government benefits, then subtracts from income items like taxes, medical costs and work expenses.

The impact of the expiration of pandemic supplements and others is already being seen on Long Island.

Rebecca Sanin, president and chief executive of the Health and Welfare Council on Long Island, said in an email: "On Long Island, school district leaders, medical professionals and community-based organization leaders are all seeing an increase in hunger and need associated with the ending of pandemic-era programs that helped to reduce child poverty."

The Children's Defense Fund said in a statement it had repeatedly called on federal lawmakers to restore the monthly, refundable Child Tax Credit passed in 2021 as part of the American Rescue Plan Act.

Its president and chief executive, the Rev. Starsky Wilson, added, "The 2021 expanded Child Tax Credit supported families with monthly checks of up to \$300 per child to cover basic necessities. The expanded [child tax credit] illustrated the power of a fair tax code by driving historic reductions in child poverty and food insecurity."

State and county data will be publicly released Thursday.



Astronaut Frank Rubio floats near the cupola, the International Space Station's "window to the world."

ASTRONAUT RUBIO SETS RECORD FOR LONGEST U.S. SPACEFLIGHT

NASA astronaut Frank Rubio now holds the record for the longest U.S. spaceflight.

Rubio surpassed the U.S. space endurance record of 355 days on Monday at the International Space Station.

He arrived at the outpost last September with two Russians for a routine six months. But their stay was doubled after their Soyuz capsule developed a coolant leak while parked at the space station.

The trio will return to Earth on Sept. 27 in a replacement capsule that was sent up empty for the ride home. By then,

Rubio will have spent 371 days in space, more than two weeks longer than Mark Vande Hei, the previous U.S. record holder for a single spaceflight.

A Russian cosmonaut, Valeri Polyakov, holds the world record of 437 days, set in the mid-1990s aboard the Mir space station.

"Your dedication is truly out of this world, Frank!" NASA chief Bill Nelson said via X, formerly known as Twitter.

A replacement crew of two Russians and an American is set to launch to the station from Kazakhstan on Friday. — AP