

Know Your Surroundings – Who’s Poor and Who’s on Welfare...2014?

How common is poverty? Who makes up those living in poverty? Who’s receiving government assistance?

Here’s the short response – the correct answers are highlighted – follow the links for details and sources:

1. How many people do you think were poor last year?
 - a. less than a million
 - b. four or five million
 - c. 40 to 50 million people**
 - d. 80 to 90 million people
2. What percentage of the population was poor last year?
 - a. less than one percent
 - b. 5 or 6 percent
 - c. 15 percent**
 - d. 30 or 40 percent

According to the Census, the [nation’s official poverty rate in 2014](#) was 14.8 percent, which means there were 46.7 million people in poverty. Using the Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM), the Census estimated that the [SPM rate was 15.3 percent for 2014](#), significantly higher than the official rate. In 2014, 48.4 million people were poor using the SPM definition of poverty. The SPM corrects for many of the limitations in the way the official poverty line is calculated. Doing so, it estimates more people in poverty in 2014, not fewer.

3. Which group makes up the largest part of those living in poverty?
 - a. Whites**
 - b. Blacks
 - c. Hispanics
 - d. Immigrants

Working with [Census figures](#), the poor were mostly White – 66% of the poor were White and 42% were non-Hispanic White. Among those in poverty in 2014, 23% were Black and 28% were Hispanic [Hispanics can be of any race].

4. What percentage of the American children were poor last year?
 - a. less than one percent
 - b. between 10 and 20 percent
 - c. between 20 and 30 percent**
 - d. over 50 percent

According to the [Census](#), the poverty rate in 2014 for children under age 18 was 21.1 per-cent.

5. Of those living in poverty, what percent do you think were children (how much of the poverty population were children)?
 - a. less than one percent
 - b. between 10 and 20 percent
 - c. between 20 and 30 percent**
 - d. over 50 percent

Working with [Census figures](#), 33.3% or 15.5 million of the poor were Children under 18; 30.3% or 14.1 million were Children 15 & under, and 14% or 6.6 million were Children 6 & under

6. What percentage of all American households received means-tested cash assistance (TANF) – what most people regard as “welfare” last year? In other words, how common do Americans receive this kind of aid?
 - a. less than one percent
 - b. between 10 and 20 percent
 - c. between 20 and 30 percent**
 - d. over 50 percent

The Census Bureau’s [CPS 2015 Annual Social and Economic Supplement](#) revealed that in 2014 nearly 22 million Americans (6.9%) lived in a household where someone received means tested cash assistance. [Non-poor households](#) were the major recipients of means-tested cash assistance – representing 13 million in households above the poverty line. Broadening the definition of cash assistance, according to [HHS](#), in 2012, 23.6 percent of the total population received or lived with a family member who received a benefit of any amount from TANF, SNAP, or SSI at some point during the year.

7. What percentage of those living in poverty received means-tested cash assistance (TANF) – in other words, how common was cash assistance among those who were poor last year?
 - a. less than one percent
 - b. between 10 and 20 percent**
 - c. between 20 and 30 percent
 - d. over 50 percent

In 2014, 76% of those living in poor households received some form of means-tested assistance and 49% received food stamps (SNAP). However, only 8.2 million or 17.6% of the poor lived in households that received means-tested cash assistance and only 6.9 million or 14.9% lived in public or authorized housing, according to the Census Bureau’s [CPS 2015 Annual Social and Economic Supplement](#).