

Rural Poverty

Obj. 6.3: Examine poverty-related barriers that can hinder healthy living.



Cost of Living Estimate

Estimate how much money you spend on an average day. Consider food, transportation, recreational spending, and any other costs you can estimate for a single day. Add every cost you can think of, no matter who pays for it (you, your parents, or someone else).

Item/Expense	Estimated Cost
Total Cost:	

DISCUSS

Extreme Poverty

In 2011 extreme poverty in the United States, meaning households living on less than \$2 per day before government benefits, was double 1996 levels at 1.5 million households, including 2.8 million children. This would be roughly 1.2% of the US population in 2011, presuming a mean household size of 2.55 people.

"Extreme Poverty in the United States, 1996 to 2011." National Poverty Center, February 2012.

Reflect upon the following questions, then discuss your answers with a partner.

1. Was it difficult or surprising to calculate your daily expenses? What was the biggest source of expense?
2. If you had to live on significantly less per day, how might this impact your life and your health?
3. One dictionary definition of poverty is, "the state of one who lacks a usual or socially acceptable amount of money or material possessions." Beyond this definition, how would you define poverty?

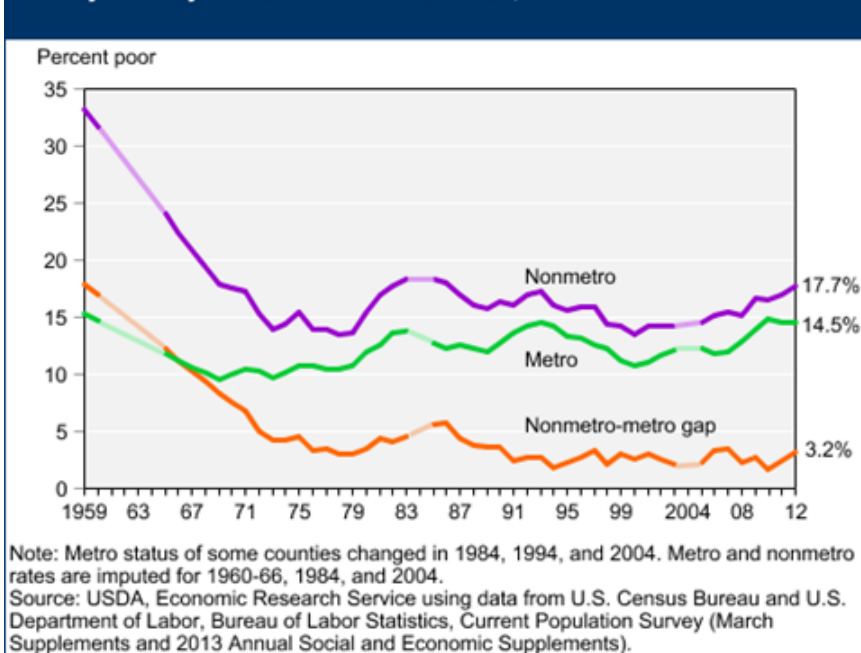
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INFO

How is Poverty Defined?

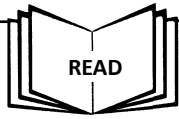
Any individual with total income less than an amount deemed to be sufficient to purchase basic needs of food, shelter, clothing, and other essential goods and services is classified as poor. The amount of income necessary to purchase these basic needs is the poverty line or threshold and is set by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The 2012 poverty line for an individual under 65 years of age is \$11,945. The poverty line for a three-person family with one child and two adults is \$18,480. For a family with two adults and three children the poverty line is \$27,400. Income includes cash income (pretax income and cash welfare assistance), but excludes in-kind welfare assistance, such as food stamps and Medicaid. Poverty thresholds are set for families by size and composition, and they are updated annually to correct for inflation.

"Geography of Poverty." U.S. Department of Agriculture. <http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/rural-poverty-well-being/geography-of-poverty.aspx#.Uu16O3ewKgk>

Poverty rates by metro/nonmetro residence, 1959-2012



1. What has happened to Nonmetro (rural) poverty since 2004?
2. What overall trend do you notice about the Nonmetro-metro gap?



In Rural Poverty, Showing Up is the First Step.

Listen to the audio recording as you read the following transcript:

STEVE INSKEEP, host: So that city gets a visit from John Edwards today, and tomorrow he visits Kentucky, which is where writer and rural advocate Dee Davis has witnessed the visits of politicians past.

Mr. DEE DAVIS (Director, Center for Rural Strategies): My corner of rural America is the Kentucky coalfields. When Bobby Kennedy came in '68, I was a high school Republican but rushed home to brush my hair so it flipped across my forehead just like his. And that afternoon, I found myself walking alongside him as he toured a street of ramshackle houses in my town.

He stepped into one home that I knew. I'd played ball, even had fistfights with the boys in that house. And as I stood there looking through the window, me and the national press corps, I realized not just that those boys were poor but that the whole country was going to see it.

A short time later, Kennedy was gone and so were those rough houses, replaced by sturdy subsidized homes. Big yards. And the kids we watched through that window all grew up good.

In 1998, Minnesota Senator Paul Wellstone came to make the same tour. His wife Sheila had family all up in here and they asked me to drive the van. We talked about the RFK trip, schools, health, the joys of rural life. Wellstone was a big cut-up. He challenged his wife's uncle to a wrestling match and explained to a room full of dinner guests that he had converted - he had become a hillbilly Jew.

The last place I took Senator Wellstone was a meeting of young miners on respirators. Over the soft hiss of oxygen tanks, these men pulled down their masks, smothering to explain in coarse whispers how coal dust health and safety laws were routinely disregarded.

Afterwards he asked me: Where is the Kentucky delegation? He went back to Washington and dedicated himself to fixing our coal dust issues. Paul was a senator from somewhere far bigger than Minnesota.

This week, presidential candidate John Edwards is coming to retrace the RFK visit. I wish they were all coming. These things matter. It is not about party; it's about eyeballs. And there are sights that need seeing.

When no one shows up to witness the obliteration of mountaintops - vast hillsides being shoved into creek beds - then desperate mining practices flourish.

When the rest of the country never sees the broken families and children cut adrift from addiction, then a pharmaceutical company can get off with a fine and a pat on the rump for years of dumping pain drugs like OxyContin into these rural communities.

People will tell you government doesn't work. But I've seen it work. It starts with somebody showing up and making an effort. I have also seen it fail. Mostly that happens when no one's paying attention.

*Source: "In Rural Poverty, Showing Up Is a First Step." Dee Davis. NPR. 7/17/2007.
<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=12017456>*

DISCUSS

How do you think Dee Davis would describe the effect of poverty on health?



Poverty-related Barriers to Health

Poverty is linked to many health disparities. In some cases, poverty is a direct cause of the health effect. For example, if one does not have enough money to purchase food, hunger and malnutrition will result. In other cases, poverty may contribute to a problem or the relationship may be difficult to determine. We might say that these types of negative health effects are correlated with poverty. For example, a person in poverty may be more likely to consume more sugary beverages. This could be due to a number of factors, but one contributor might be that poverty in their neighborhood left their school system struggling, which led to poor education in health, which leaves them unaware of the health dangers of high levels of sugary beverages in the diet.

Those in poverty often lack access to basic rights of shelter, sanitation, water, information, nutrition, health, and education. A few of these, like sanitation and water, are less of a concern in the United States than they in other countries, especially developing ones. Those ones are done as an example in the table below. For each basic right, list the barriers and the possible effects on health.

Human Right	Barrier related to poverty	Possible effect on health
Water	<i>Example: Lack of infrastructure for clean water</i>	--Exposure to waterborne diseases (bacteria, parasites, etc.) --Dehydration, diarrhea, etc.
Sanitation	<i>Example: Lack of infrastructure for waste removal (human waste, garbage, etc.), bathing, and hand washing</i>	--Exposure to infectious diseases --Lack of privacy, difficulty maintaining hygiene & cleanliness
Shelter		
Information		
Nutrition		
Health		
Education		



Short Story

Write a **short story** about one day in the life of a fictitious character growing up in **poverty** in a **rural community**. In the story, include at least **three poverty-related barriers** and their **effect on the health** of your character.



Representations of Poverty & Health

Find a representation of poverty and its impact on health on the Internet. This could be a news article, blog post, poem, short story, book, film, political cartoon, or work of art. You are not limited to those options, but those are examples of resources that can all be accessed through google searches online.

1. Describe your representation of poverty.
2. What barriers did it represent?
3. How does poverty impact the health of the subject?