

New data out from the U.S. Census Bureau yesterday show [a nation on the decline](#): Millions more Americans are in poverty and hundreds of thousands more are without health insurance compared with a year ago—and our median household income is now the lowest since 1997.

As Time's Justin Fox [puts it](#):

I don't know how much of this was bad luck and how much was bad policy (nobody does), but there's really no getting around the fact that the Bush presidency was an economic debacle. Americans got poorer on his watch.

(Thanks to AFL-CIO Labor Standards Policy analyst Christine Silvia-DeGennaro for pulling together this info.)

- The number of uninsured Americans increased by 683,000 in 2008, rising from 45.7 million in 2007 to 46.3 million in 2008.
- The number of people with employment-provided health insurance fell by 1.1 million in 2008, from 177.4 million in 2007 to 176.3 million in 2008. This decline comes after four years of increases in the number of people with employment-provided health insurance.
- The percentage of Americans with employment-provided health insurance has declined for several years. This is the first year in four years the actual number of people with employment-provided health insurance has fallen.

As the Economic Policy Institute ([EPI](#)) and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities ([CBPP](#)) report, the number of uninsured didn't go up dramatically because public programs are increasingly providing coverage to people without insurance. Some 3.1 million more people were covered by Medicaid/State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) in 2008, a 7.8 percent increase over 2007. As a comparison, in 2007, the number of people who were covered by Medicaid/SCHIP increased by 3.3 percent over the number of people covered in 2006.

- After adjusting for inflation, median household income in 2008 was lower than any year since 1997. In 2008, median household income fell to \$50,303, a 3.6 percent real decline in income from 2007, when median household income was \$52,163 (in 2008 dollars). This is the largest single year decline in household income since the series began in 1967.
- In 2008, median earnings for workers who worked full-time, year-round were \$41,030, down 2 percent (in inflation adjusted terms) from 2007, when earnings were \$41,869. This is the largest drop in real earnings for full-time, year-round workers since 1981. EPI reports the number of full-time, year-round workers in 2008 fell by an incredible 4.2 percent over 2007 employment, representing a loss of 4.6 million full-time, year-round workers. As EPI states:
 - In 2008, median earnings for men who worked full-time, year-round were \$46,367, a real decline of 1.0 percent from 2007. Full-time, year-round working men are worse off than they were in 2000, when median earnings were \$46,576 (in 2008 dollars).
 - In 2008, median earnings for women who worked full-time, year-round were \$35,745, down 1.9 percent from 2007 when earnings were \$36,451 (in 2008 dollars). This is the largest drop in real earnings for full-time, year-round women workers since 1981.

This erosion in full-time, full-year workers was equally due to a loss of full-time work (shifting to part-time) and an erosion of weeks worked. The consequence of both of these trends—lower real earnings and eroded work-time—was a record decline in the annual inflation-adjusted earnings.

And as wages deteriorate, poverty is increasing dramatically.

- 39.8 million people were poor in 2008, 2.6 million more than in 2007.
- The poverty rate in 2008 was 13.2 percent, up 0.7 percentage points from 12.5 percent in 2007. The poverty rate is at its highest level since 1997.
- The child poverty rate increased to 19 percent in 2008, up from 18 percent in 2007. 14.1 million children were poor in 2008, up from 13.3 million in 2007.
- 10.3 percent of families were poor in 2008, up from 9.8 percent of families in 2007.

Even worse: This isn't the worst. EPI reports this is just the "[tip of the iceberg](#)" when it comes to the impact of the recession on these indicators.