

The New York Times

Census Shows How Recession Hit N.Y.

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Published: September 28, 2010

The nation's economic collapse jolted many New Yorkers into financial distress, driving some into poverty and dependence on food stamps and unemployment benefits and even altering their living arrangements between 2007 and 2009, according to census data released Tuesday that offered the first extensive measure of how the city weathered the recession.

Although New York City has fared better than the country as a whole, recording smaller increases in poverty and smaller declines in household income, more subtle indicators, like the rise in the number of New Yorkers living in homes without kitchens, underscore the struggles confronting many.

The Census Bureau's 2009 [American Community Survey](#) also found that from 2007 to 2009, the income of single people in the city shrank the most among New Yorkers; the poverty rate edged up among people 15 to 64 years old; both parents were in the work force more often; home values dipped; the share of renters increased compared with owners; more renters were paying over 35 percent of their income on housing; and a smaller share said they owned two vehicles.

The proportion of very rich and very poor New Yorkers rose slightly, and the gap between them remained higher in New York than in any other state, and, in Manhattan, higher than in any other county in the country.

"We haven't seen what happens when unemployment benefits and other cushions fall away and about whether we're seeing another version of what happened in the Great Depression — starting to build up this enormous cohort of people who have been out of work for a long period of time," said David R. Jones, the president of the [Community Service Society](#), an antipoverty group.

The results confirmed suggestions by sociologists that the sluggish economy had a broader impact on the way people lived. The proportion of women in the city who had never married crossed the 40 percent threshold in 2009 (men hit 46 percent), the number of women 20 to 34 who gave birth during the preceding year declined, and more people were living with roommates or unmarried partners.

While the poverty rate remained largely unchanged in the city, it rose in New York State to 14.2 percent in 2009 from 13.8 percent in 2008 (according to a different census survey released this month, it climbed in the state to 15.8 percent from 14.2 percent) and in New Jersey to 9.4 percent from 8.8 percent (although New Jersey was among only five states in which the rate was below 10 percent).

In the city, the poverty rate ranged from a low of 6 percent among non-Hispanic whites on Staten Island to a high of 36 percent among Hispanics in the Bronx. It was 18.7 percent over all in 2009.

“We strengthened our safety net and made unprecedented efforts to expand job training and support the entrepreneurs in our city who have created 1 in 10 of every new job in America so far this year,” Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg said.

Earlier this year, the city said its own more sophisticated measure of poverty classified 22 percent of New Yorkers as poor in 2008, when the Census Bureau put the official figure at 17.6 percent. Officials would not speculate on what the 2009 rate would be by the more complex measure that takes account of costs like commuting and day care and benefits like tax credits.

“The official measure does not include much of what has been done to cushion the blow of the recession on low-income families,” said Mark K. Levitan, poverty research director for the city’s [Center for Economic Opportunity](#). “The new and expanded tax credits and the large increase in food stamp participation don’t get counted in the official measure; they will get counted in ours.”

Joel Berg, executive director of the [New York City Coalition Against Hunger](#), said the rising raw numbers and percentages of city residents living below the federal poverty line (\$17,600 for a family of three) and the shrinking income of many New Yorkers were “the latest proof that low-income, hungry and even middle-class New Yorkers are suffering mightily in this recession, even as the ultrarich become even wealthier.”

Jilly Stephens, executive director of [City Harvest](#), cautioned that “all indicators show that demand for emergency food isn’t static. It’s going up.”

The proportion of residents receiving food stamps in 2009 rose to 17.2 percent from 14.9 percent in 2008 and 13.3 percent in 2007.

The share with no health insurance declined to 4.5 percent from 5.2 percent, the result of government programs’ picking up the slack.

Home values have plunged by double digits since 2006 in the suburbs, but they have dropped less in the city, to an average of \$517,900 in 2009 from \$537,600 in 2008. In the Bronx, Brooklyn and Manhattan, they barely changed.

Median household income was lower in 2009 than it was in 2007, dipping in the Bronx to \$32,893 from \$35,341 and on Staten Island to \$66,292 from \$69,309. But the median income was unchanged in Brooklyn at \$43,166, in Manhattan at \$68,706 and in Queens at \$55,120. The citywide median was \$50,033.

The American Community Survey is a separate measurement from the 2010 census, which will be released next year.

A version of this article appeared in print on September 29, 2010, on page A22 of the New York edition.