

# ***PERSONALLY SPEAKING***

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**DATA ON INCOME, POVERTY, AND HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE IN 2007:  
SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE**

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There is enough information in the U.S. Census Bureau report released today on income, poverty, and health insurance coverage in 2007 to satisfy advocates and supporters of both sides of the campaign for the White House. The following calls attention to some of the report's major findings.

► Real median household income rose by 1.3 percent between 2006 and 2007 to \$50,233. There was an even greater percentage increase in the median earnings of men (3.8 percent) and women (5.0 percent) working year round full time. While there was only a small decrease in the number of year-round full-time men, the number of similarly employed women increased by 950,000 over the year. On a per capita basis, however, real income slipped by 1.1 percent from \$27,100 to \$26,804. The decline was most severe for Asians who saw per capita income slide over the year from \$31,339 to \$29,901. There was no statistically significant year-to-year change for black Americans who had per capita income of \$18,428 in 2007.

► Over the year, the share of income for the poorest Americans – those in the lowest quintile of the income distribution -- remained unchanged at 3.7 percent. In other words, they took home an estimated \$3.70 of every \$100 of income generated by the U.S. economy. Shares for the second, third, and fourth quintiles actually increased marginally such that the third quintile – the American middle class – took home \$15.30 of every \$100 of national income. Only the richest Americans – the ones in the highest quintile -- experienced a drop in their share of U.S. income from \$49.40 in 2006 to \$48.50 for every \$100 of income produced in the U.S. economy.

► The rate of poverty in 2007 stood at 12.5 percent compared to 12.3 percent in 2006. However, this difference IS NOT statistically significant. Even so, the number of persons living in poverty climbed by 816,000 over the year to a total of 37,276,000 and this increase IS statistically significant. So too is the 504,000 increase in the number of children below age 18 living in poverty. In 2007 children accounted for 34 percent of all persons in poverty. Among those who worked year round full time in 2007, only 2.5 percent were classified as poor.

► Poverty among all U.S. families remained steady at 9.8 percent for the last three years. But poverty is a much greater problem for female-headed families (no husband present) where 28.3

percent in 2007 were classified as poor. Their rate is 5.8 times higher than the poverty rate for married-couple families. This huge difference has persisted for many years.

► The annual income gap between poor families and all other families rose to \$77,454 in 2007. This gap balloons to \$85,734 when married-couple families above the poverty line are compared to female-headed families below the poverty line. These data, perhaps more so than any others on poverty in the United States, underscore the heavy burden that poverty represents for the typical poor family and especially for the female-headed family.

► The number of persons not covered by health insurance fell by 1,337,000 dropping the noncoverage rate for the entire population during the year ending in 2007 to 15.3 percent. A substantial enrollment increase in government health insurance programs accounts for this improvement. However, among persons 65 years of age and older there was a statistically significant *increase* (145,000) in the number of persons without health insurance coverage. This increase no doubt is attributable to an overall surge in the senior population of 755,000 between 2006 and 2007. Nevertheless, at 1.9 percent the noncoverage rate for persons 65 and older is the lowest of any age group.

This Census Bureau report for 2007 provides vitally important information on the performance of the U.S. economy and the well-being of all Americans. In a presidential election year, we can expect the strategists from both parties to pick and choose the bits and pieces of information that best serve their candidate. There is more than enough to go all around.

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