



## Update from the American Community Survey

### Poverty in the Washington Metropolitan Area

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In 2012, the poverty rate<sup>1</sup> in the Washington Metropolitan Area (WMA) was 8.4 percent, up from its 2008 level of 7.0 percent. Despite this increase the region's poverty rate was almost half that of the nation's, and has been so since 2005.

Among the 15 largest metro areas, the WMA had the lowest poverty rate by a substantial margin. Boston and Minneapolis had the second lowest poverty rate of 10.7 percent. Six of the largest metros had poverty rates higher than the nation's rate of 15.9 percent: Houston, Atlanta, Phoenix, Detroit, Miami and Los Angeles.

#### Poverty Rate in the Nation's 15 Largest Metro Areas in 2012 and 2008 and by Select Race/Ethnic Group in 2012

	Overall, 2012	Overall, 2008	Pct Pt Change, 2008-2012	2012			
				White	Black/African American	Asian	Hispanic
<b>Washington (WMA)</b>	<b>8.4</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>13.5</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>12.8</b>
<b>Boston</b>	10.7	9.2	1.5	7.1	21.9	16.6	25.7
<b>Minneapolis</b>	10.7	8.5	2.2	6.4	36.6	15.6	25.7
<b>Seattle</b>	11.7	9.4	2.3	8.3	26.0	12.6	23.8
<b>San Francisco</b>	11.9	9.5	2.4	7.3	25.7	10.2	17.5
<b>Philadelphia</b>	13.4	11.6	1.8	7.4	25.8	13.6	29.6
<b>Chicago</b>	14.5	11.9	2.6	7.3	30.5	11.7	21.0
<b>New York</b>	14.8	12.5	2.3	7.9	21.4	15.0	24.4
<b>Dallas</b>	15.0	12.9	2.1	7.7	22.9	11.4	24.1
<b>Houston</b>	16.4	13.7	2.7	7.2	22.8	11.3	24.6
<b>Atlanta</b>	16.6	11.7	4.9	9.3	23.6	14.7	29.8
<b>Phoenix</b>	17.4	13.6	3.8	10.1	27.2	13.4	29.4
<b>Detroit</b>	17.4	14.1	3.3	11.0	35.4	10.4	27.1
<b>Miami</b>	17.5	13.8	3.7	9.6	27.7	11.9	19.3
<b>Los Angeles</b>	17.6	14.2	3.4	9.6	25.0	12.4	24.0

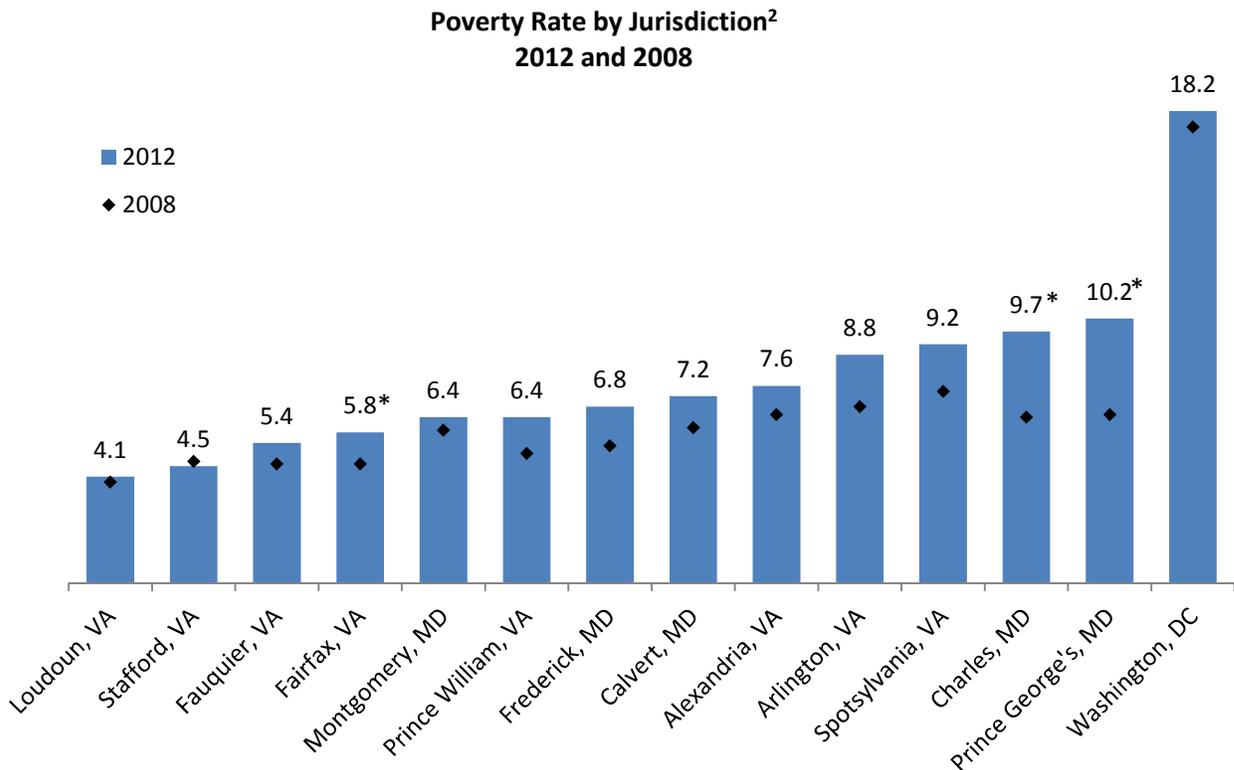
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008 and 2012 American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates

<sup>1</sup> See p. 3 for an explanation of poverty rates.

Between 2008 and 2012, all of the 15 largest metro areas experienced statistically significant increases in their poverty rates. The poverty rate in the WMA increased by 1.4 percentage points, the smallest increase among the major metro areas. The Atlanta metro area had the largest increase of 4.9 percentage points.

Within the WMA, the poverty rate varied by both race/ethnic group and jurisdiction. The region’s Black/African American population had a poverty rate of 13.5 percent, which was the highest poverty rate of the minority groups and nearly three times higher than that of the White population (4.6 percent). The Hispanic population had a poverty rate of 12.8 percent, while the Asian population had the lowest poverty rate of the minority groups at 6.4 percent. The poverty rate for each racial/ethnic group in the WMA was considerably lower than for the same group in all other major metro areas.

Of the available jurisdictions<sup>2</sup> in the WMA, the District of Columbia continued to have the highest poverty rate. In 2012, 18.2 percent of the District’s population lived below the poverty line. Prince George’s County had the next highest percentage (10.2 percent), followed by Charles County (9.7 percent). Loudoun County (4.1 percent), Stafford County (4.5 percent) and Fauquier County (5.4 percent) had the lowest poverty rates in 2012.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012 and 2008 American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates

<sup>2</sup> Data only available for jurisdictions with 65,000+ people

\* Statistically significant change between 2008 and 2012

Only three jurisdictions had statistically significant changes to their poverty rates between 2008 and 2012: Prince George’s County, Charles County and Fairfax County. Prince George’s County increased by 3.7 percentage points, to 10.2 percent from 6.5 percent in 2008. Charles County increased by nearly as much, 3.3 percentage points, to 9.7 percent from 6.4 percent. At 5.8 percent, the poverty rate in Fairfax County was lower than most jurisdictions in the region, but it increased by 1.2 percent from 4.6 percent in 2008. Neither the WMA nor any of its jurisdictions had statistically significant changes between 2011 and 2012. So while many performance indicators in the region have improved, the poverty rate has not had appreciable improvement.

### **How the Poverty Rate is Calculated in the ACS**

The poverty rate is the percentage of people living in families whose before-tax money income in the 12 months preceding the survey falls below the poverty thresholds. The survey is conducted throughout the year so the reference period spans 23 months. Capital gains and non-cash benefits, such as SNAP and housing subsidies, are not included as income.

The poverty thresholds vary by family size, number of children, and age of householder. They do not vary geographically. They are updated annually to account for inflation. For example, the poverty threshold for a family of four people was \$23,492 in 2012.

### **GMU Center for Regional Analysis**

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### **Updates from the 2010 Census and American Community Survey**

The Center for Regional Analysis issue periodic reports on demographic and economic topics based on newly released data from the 2010 Census and the American Community Survey. The American Community Survey (ACS) is an ongoing survey that provides detailed data every year about states, metropolitan areas, counties and cities. More information about the 2010 Census and the ACS can be found at [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov).