# Poverty the United States

There have been many reforms in the American government that have been passed to help address the issue of poverty, but most of them have not been effective. Nearly 50 million US citizens are living in unfavorable conditions. This means that poverty continues to be a social issue in the country (Semuels). When this country was formulated, it was based on the belief that it is a land of opportunity where everyone is enabled to work hard and achieve the American Dream (Varghese, 228). People come to this country today with the hope of improving their lives, but instead of achieving this, many are faced with obstacles that hinder their success. According to statistics done by (Zile), 18% of the American populations who live in poor conditions have jobs, but they also do not make enough money to maintain needs such as proper health care, good shelter, and clothing. It is said that one in every ten Americans lives in poverty (Feeney) agrees with this statistic and states that amongst the developed countries, America is ranked higher in its poverty level.

## Causes of poverty

Poverty is caused by many aspects. The leading causes include employment skills, stereotyping, lack of education increased cases of under and unemployment, and social activities. Most people, especially immigrants lack work skills needed by most employers thus limiting their job opportunities. This forces most of them to work on blue color jobs, which does not pay much. Some of these factors are due to lack of education where most of them did not go to school. Increased cases of unemployment and underemployment are another factor that contributes to increments of poverty in the country. There are few jobs, and the population continues to grow; when the unemployment rate is high, it means that majority of the citizens cannot afford to maintain their living standards. For example, when the housing price rates increased in the year 2007 (Edsall), most residents were forced into poverty. The great economic recession that happened during this time made it difficult for many citizens to keep up with their living conditions. Most people lost their jobs being forced to move into areas they can afford. It can be said that the America’s economic condition has contributed to poverty increments.

Addictions and mental illness have led many families to poverty. According to Feeney, these conditions hinder one from holding jobs, finding better employment, and adding on their skills. When one is addicted to drugs r alcohol, their working ability deteriorates with time. They start becoming unproductive which eventually leads to loss of job or demotion to a lower level. Mental illness, on the other hand, has led to increased number of poor peoples in the country who live in very harsh conditions.

## Poverty and homelessness

In the US, many poor people face the risk of being homeless, and this is because of things like the inability to afford housing, the burden of housing cost, unemployment. The number of those doubled up by friends and relatives is as high as seven million. For instance, as of January 2015, 564,708 people were reported of experiencing homelessness which means that they were either sleeping out in the cold or an emergency shelter. Homelessness can be said to be on a downward trend and number stated above is a decrease from 643,000 people in 2009. As such, many states (33) have reported a decrease in homelessness while although only 18 reported a reduction in unsheltered homelessness. In 2015, the national rate of homelessness fell to 17.7 homeless individuals to 18.3 in every 10,000. Currently, in the US, a majority of the states had a decrease in every particular subpopulation. For instance, 33 states reported a decline in family homelessness, 31 reported a decrease in chronic homeless people while a drop in veteran homelessness was reported by 33 states.

There is the issue of homelessness, which is because of poverty.

## Current Ideas for addressing poverty

There have been reforms that are aimed at addressing poverty issues in the country. There is the food stamp program, which aims at addressing food insecurity and nutrition problems. This is one of the largest anti-poverty programs that have made great efforts in supporting the poor (Varghese, 232). Also, there is the attempt to create more job opportunities for Americans. Dealing with the issue of immigration, many Americans are assured of employment since the threat of other immigrants is reduced. Citizens complain of their job opportunities being given to immigrants thus rendering them jobless.

## The 1996 Welfare Reform Act

In 1996, a bill (The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act) was signed into law by then-President Bill Clinton and its sole purpose were to help reduce poverty in the US. People living on under $2 per day were the target of the initiative, and their numbers were meant to be cut. It is, however, of the essence to note that since the legislation was signed into law, the number of families living in extreme poverty has more than doubled from 636,000 to a possible 1.6 million, which is a 130% increase (Sheafar). By putting a 5-year limit on receiving the welfare money and insisting that beneficiaries be involved in the workforce, the law set to hang the effects of its intended purpose. Many of the people in extreme poverty cannot maintain a job and as such have been ruled out the equation of the welfare system hence the rise in numbers. Since the bill was signed, the number of children in poverty has also increased to one out of every three according to the World Bank poverty metric of living on $2 a day (Feeney). The effects of the law even got worse with the onset of the economic depression, and since it encourages families to be shed off the program, the law has provided a low-lying bed for increased poverty levels in the US.

In conclusion, poverty continues to be a social problem in the United States. Programs have been set up to help improve the situation, and some have succeeded while others have failed. What proves to be more effective is creating more job opportunities both skilled and unskilled to cater for every citizen in the country.

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