



**For immediate release**

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## **Poverty rate at 50-year high in San Diego County**

### **New Census data show 850,000 county residents living in economic hardship**

Poverty in San Diego County shot up in 2008, rising at a much faster pace than in California or the nation. This plunge in quality of life for many San Diegans is documented in U.S. Census data released today.

The data show that 850,000 county residents -- 29% of the population -- were living in economic hardship in 2008, according to analysis by the Center on Policy Initiatives. That measure, using a threshold double the federal poverty level, is a more realistic gauge in cities like San Diego where living costs are higher than the national average.

“The problem is not only the increase in unemployment, but a growth in working poverty as more people have had their hours cut to part-time,” said CPI Director of Research and Policy Murtaza Baxamusa. “Nearly a third of our county population is now struggling to make ends meet under severe economic distress.”

The County’s official poverty rate rose in 2008 from 11.1% to 12.6%, the highest level on record in the past 50 years. That means 46,000 more people fell below the federal poverty level, subsisting on less than \$10,991 for an individual or \$21,834 for a family of two adults with two children.

But the poverty threshold is the same throughout the nation for various family sizes, so the Census Bureau also reports how many people live below 200% of the federal level, still a very low income in San Diego. In 2008, 62,000 more County residents slipped beneath that level.

The biggest significant increase in poverty was among white men of working age.

Imperial County had the state’s highest poverty rate -- percentage of people living below the federal poverty level -- in 2008: 22.9%.

“The stark increase in poverty in our region underlines the need for public policies that create not just any jobs, but good jobs with pathways to stable careers,” Baxamusa said. “As the economy recovers and people return to employment, they must have fair wage and benefit levels that eliminate working poverty.”

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