

**MEDIA COVERAGE
ON THE RELEASE OF**

**“STILL WORKING HARD, STILL FALLING SHORT: NEW FINDINGS ON THE
CHALLENGES CONFRONTING AMERICA’S WORKING FAMILIES”
OCTOBER 14, 2008**

**PRODUCED BY THE WORKING POOR FAMILIES PROJECT WITH SUPPORT
FROM THE ANNIE E. CASEY, FORD, JOYCE, AND C.S. MOTT FOUNDATION**

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- **Bangor Daily News, Opinion-Editorial submitted by Maine Center for Economic Policy**
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FULL ARTICLES

The Associated Press, Ellen Simon

Report: Working poor increased from '02 to '06

Oct. 14, 2008

Ran in:

National CBS News

MSNBC

Business Week

Forbes, NY

San Diego Union Tribune, CA

Rocky Mountain News – Brief

Philadelphia Inquirer, PA

Long Beach Press-Telegram, CA

Ventura County Star, CA

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Arizona Central

Oakland Press, MI

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Wrightstown Post Gazette, WI

The Chronicle of Philanthropy

Myrtle Beach Sun Times, SC

Winston-Salem Journal, NC

Journalism Center Daily Summary

CBS4-TV – Denver, CO

Toronto Star, Canada

Hattiesburg American

Conde Nast Portfolio

International Herald Tribune, France

Taiwan News

NEW YORK - The number of jobs paying a poverty-level wage increased by 4.7 million between 2002 and 2006, according to a new analysis of census data released Tuesday.

A report by The Working Poor Families Project, based on an analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data, found conditions worsened for the working poor in the four years ending in 2006, as the number of low-income working families increased by 350,000. The project is funded by the Annie E. Case, Ford, Joyce and C.S. Mott Foundations.

The report defines a low-income working family as those earning less than twice the Census definition of poverty. In 2006, the most recent year for available data, a family of four earning \$41,228 or less qualified as a low-income family.

The number of jobs with pay below the poverty threshold increased to 29.4 million, or 22 percent of all jobs, in 2006 from 24.7 million, or 19 percent of all jobs, in 2002.

"The real surprising news, the alarming news, is that both the number and percentage of low-income families increased during this period," said Brandon Roberts, co-author of the report. "This was a time when we had solid and robust economic growth."

An increase in poverty "is not just a new phenomena over the last six months," he said.

Poverty-wage jobs increased in part because 2.5 million new jobs paid poverty wages; additionally 2.2 million jobs that paid greater than poverty wages in 2002 became poverty-wage jobs by 2006, as pay failed to keep up with the cost of living, Roberts said.

In two states, Mississippi and New Mexico, 40 percent of working families were low income in 2006, according to the report.

In 11 other states, at least 33 percent of working families were low income: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Idaho, Louisiana, Montana, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and West Virginia.

The number of low-income families rose to nearly 9.6 million, or 28 percent of the total population, in 2006 from 9.2 million, or roughly 27 percent, in 2002, according to the report. The number of children in low-income families rose by roughly 800,000 during the same period, climbing to 21 million from 20.2 million.

During the period, the number of working families spending more than one-third of their income on housing grew to 59 percent from 52 percent.

The report sought to address what it called myths about low-income families. For instance, it found 72 percent of low-income families work, with adults in low-income working families working, on average, 2,552 hours per year in 2006, the equivalent of one and one-quarter full-time jobs.

It also found that 52 percent of low-income families are headed by married couples; 69 percent have only American-born parents; 43 percent are white and non-Hispanic and only one-quarter of low-income families receive food stamp assistance.

**Reuters and Reuters India
Growing Number of Workers are Poor: Study
Tuesday, Oct. 14, 2008
By Diane Bartz**

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Even before the collapse of major U.S. banks and the Dow's plunge, the rolls of America's working poor grew as their piece of the U.S. economic pie shrank, according to a study released on Tuesday.

The percentage of working families who were poor rose to 28 percent in 2006, from 27 percent in 2002, the Working Poor Families Project said in a report based on government data collected as part of the American Family Survey.

"If we start factoring in what's happened this year, we know the number will increase," said Brandon Roberts, an author of "Working Hard, Still Falling Short."

The report found that 9.6 million working families were poor in 2006, up from 9.2 million in 2002, the report said. "One-third of all (U.S.) children reside in low-income working families," said Roberts.

By 2008 standards, the report defined working poor as a family of four living on less than \$42,400 in the 48 contiguous states, or slightly more in Alaska and Hawaii.

Income inequality grew over the period of the study, as janitors, cashiers, construction workers and nannies saw their portion of U.S. income decrease, compared to the richest workers, the report found.

"The fact that it's (the number of poor families) gone up 350,000 from 2002 to 2006 during what were good economic times, some claim robust economic times, is pretty surprising and it's very revealing about the bifurcation of the economy," said Roberts.

Twenty percent of working white families were low-income, while 41 percent of minority families were low-income, figures that were stable compared to 2002, the report said.

Associated Press - Georgia

Study: 30 percent of Ga. families are working poor

Tuesday, October 14, 2008

Ran in:

WMAZ-TV CBS Georgia

WTVM-TV ABC Georgia

WGCL-TV CBS Atlanta, GA

WCSC-TV Charleston, S.C.

WRCB-TV NBC Chattanooga, Tenn.

WTVY-TV CBS

WMGT-NBC, Georgia

WJXT-NBC Jacksonville

WALB-TV NBC

WAGT-TV NBC Augusta

WFXL-TV Fox

Macon Telegraph

Costal Courier

Columbus Ledger-Enquirer

Rome News-Tribune

A new national report says 30 percent of Georgia's working families are working poor. "Still Working Hard, Still Falling Short," funded in part by the nonprofit Annie E. Casey Foundation, estimates nationwide, 42 million adults and children are living in families that earn too little to meet their basic needs.

The report estimates an extra 350,000 working families in Georgia were low-income in 2006 compared to 2002.

Georgia ranks 17th among states for the rate of working poor. New Hampshire ranked No. 1.

The report shows that about 40 percent of Georgia's low-income working families have at least one parent without health insurance and 56 percent of low-income working families have housing costs greater than one-third of their income.

Associated Press – New Hampshire
Study: NH lowest in percentage of working poor
Tuesday, October 14, 2008
Ran in:
Portsmouth Herald
Foster's Daily Democrat
WCAX-TV Vermont

CONCORD, N.H. (AP) _ A new national report says New Hampshire has the lowest average of working poor families in the country.

The report, by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, found 15 percent of New Hampshire's working families were considered working poor in 2006.

It estimates that nationwide, 42 million adults and children are living in families that earn too little to meet their basic needs.

The report shows that about 34 percent of New Hampshire's low-income working families have at least one parent without health insurance and 14 percent of low-income working families have housing costs greater than one-third of their income.

Associated Press – New Mexico
NM has High Numbers of Low-Income Working Families
By Sure Major Holmes
October 15, 2008
Ran in:
Alamogordo Daily News
El Paso Times
Denver Post
MSN Money TV

ALBUQUERQUE—New Mexico has the highest percentage of low-income working families and the greatest percentage of children living in low-income working families in the nation, according to a new report.

Forty-six percent of New Mexico's children live in low-income working families, according to the national report, "Still Working Hard, Still Falling Short," released Tuesday in this state by New Mexico Voices for Children.

In New Mexico, 76 percent of low-income families work, compared to 72 percent in the U.S. as a whole. Low income is defined as 200 percent of the poverty level. In 2006, the year on which the statistics are based, that was \$20,614 for a family of four, making the threshold \$41,228.

Nationally, more than one in four working families—42 million adults and children—were low income in 2006, according to the report, which used data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2006 American Community Survey.

Since the ranks of the working poor grew by 350,000 families during a period of economic expansion, the numbers are likely to grow during the current economic downturn, the report warned.

"The current economic climate means we should be doing something, we really should be doing something," said Gerry Bradley, research director for New Mexico Voices for Children. "Ordinarily it's a slow motion crisis but this has speeded up."

New Mexico, for example, could do more to promote food stamps, which are funded by the federal government, Bradley said. Only about 70 percent of those eligible for food stamps receive them, he said.

Recent economic good times didn't reach the lower levels of the work force, he said.

Per capita income in New Mexico has actually improved and the state now ranks 43rd, Bradley said. "But when you have poverty numbers that are like this, you realize that even though the economy of the state was doing pretty good over last five or six years, it wasn't helping people at the bottom of the wage scale or living standard," he said.

Nearly 37 percent of New Mexico's jobs are in occupations that pay below the federal poverty level for a family of four, ranking the state 48th on that measure, behind West Virginia and Mississippi.

"One thing we need to do, and are doing, is attract better paying jobs," said Sharon Kayne, a spokeswoman for New Mexico Voices for Children. "But we also need to make sure our work force has the skill levels and the education required for most better paying jobs. We have to make sure that with any economic incentives we give out to get companies to move here, we're not giving out incentives for minimum wage jobs."

The report said 55 percent of low-income working families in New Mexico have at least one parent without any education beyond high school and 34 percent have at least one parent without a high school diploma.

It also found that 48 percent of minority working families in New Mexico are low-income.

Federal and state resources for adult education or for skills training programs meet only about a tenth of the need, but inadequate education plays a major role in preventing low-income workers from improving their economic outlook, Voices for Children said.

Voices for Children wants to see higher wages in New Mexico but also a support system for working families—food stamps, child care, health insurance—"because we know wages are not high enough to support a decent standard of living even with improvement at the low range of the wage scale," Bradley said.

When a federal poverty level was first established about 50 years ago, food took up about a third of a family's income, Kayne said. Since then, housing and health care costs have skyrocketed, leaving families with less money to spend on other things, she said.

New Mexico ranks 49th in the percentage of low-income working families that lack health insurance, behind Texas. Some 42 percent of New Mexico families and 60 percent of families nationwide pay housing costs greater than one-third of their income.

"One major car repair or one major health bill can really put you in financial dire straits," Kayne said. "You don't have the cushioning, you generally don't have the savings when you put that much on housing. You tend to go without a lot."

The report was produced by the Working Poor Families Project, a national initiative supported by the Annie E. Casey, Ford, Joyce and C.S. Mott foundations to examine conditions of working families.

On the Net:

Report and Working Poor Families Project: <http://www.workingpoorfamilies.org>

New Mexico Voices for Children: <http://www.nmvoices.org>

Washington Post

1 in 4 Working Families Now Low-Wage, Report Finds

By Michael A. Fletcher

October 15, 2008

Ran in:

Los Angeles Times

The Arizona Republic

The ranks of low-wage working families increased by 350,000 between 2002 and 2006, raising their numbers to nearly 9.6 million, or more than one in four of the nation's working families with children.

The report by the Working Poor Families Project, an advocacy group that analyzed census data, defined low-wage families as those earning less than double the poverty rate. For a family of four, that would have been an annual income of \$41,228 or less in 2006. The report's author, Brandon G. Roberts, attributed the increase to the growth in low-paying jobs, from health-care aides to cashiers, that form an increasing share of the nation's service-based economy.

Many of those families struggle to pay for basics, such as health care, food and housing, a battle that Roberts said has grown more acute in the past two years as the economy has stagnated.

"The stark reality is that too many American families have been in economic crisis long before this year," said Roberts, director of the non-partisan Working Poor Families Project, which advocates for state policies to improve the lives of low-income working families. "Even before this year's economic crisis, the conditions for working families were getting worse, not better."

The report adds to the growing body of data illustrating that the dynamics of the modern economy have been unkind to many working Americans. Even as the economy grew at a generally robust pace from 2002 to 2006, fewer jobs were created than in previous economic expansions. And some 4.7 million of the jobs that were created paid salaries that would leave a family of four in poverty, according to the report. Overall, the report said, more than one in five jobs in 2006 paid poverty-level wages.

The low pay leaves many families struggling to get by, as essentials consume a huge portion of their pay. "Low-income working families pay a higher percentage of their income for housing than other working families and are far less likely to have health insurance," the report said.

Entitled "Still Working Hard, Still Falling Short," the report was funded by grants from the Annie E. Casey, Ford, Joyce and Charles Stewart Mott foundations.

Even though low-wage families did not earn much, their breadwinners worked many hours -- an average of 2,552 hours per year in 2006, the equivalent of almost one and a quarter full-time workers per family. Also, 52 percent of the nation's low-income working families are headed by married couples.

The report said low-income families must become better educated if they are going to move up economically. While almost half of all job openings require more than a high school education, 88 million adult workers have only a high school education or less.

The report calls for stronger policies for working families at both the state and federal levels. It points to state policies that invest in education for working people. It also calls for increases in minimum wage above the federal wage standard, and support for initiatives such as paid parental leave.

"State actions are only part of the answer. The federal government has a role and responsibility to ensure that all hard-working families have a true opportunity for economic advancement and success," the report said.

Baltimore Sun
Working and Poor
By Dan Rodericks
October 15, 2008

The growl about executive compensation and profits at the expense of American jobs can't get loud enough. It is way overdue. So is the revival of organized labor. Some day soon we're going to hit a critical mass and fix the great inequities -- the lousy wages, the lack of benefits, the incessant cost cutting and staff reductions to increase profit margins. For their stubborn resistance on the minimum wage alone, the Republicans are getting what they deserve. Here's the latest from America's post-welfare, post-Reaganomics, almost-post Bush era: More than one in four working families -- a total of 42 million adults and children -- are low-income, earning too little to meet their basic needs.

"Still Working Hard, Still Falling Short," a report produced by the Working Poor Families Project, found that an additional 350,000 working families were low-income in 2006 compared to 2002.

The report also found increasing income inequality, with a widening gap between the share of income the highest-earning families receive and that earned by the least affluent. "This increase in income disparity and in the number of low-income working families came during a period of economic expansion, suggesting that those numbers will continue to grow during this economic downturn," the report said.

"Still Working Hard, Still Falling Short" was produced by the Working Poor Families Project, a national initiative supported by the Annie E. Casey, Ford, Joyce, and C.S. Mott Foundations to examine the conditions of America's working families.

"Low-income working families pay a higher percentage of their income for housing than other working families and are far less likely to have health insurance," according to the report. "At the same time, low-income working families work hard. Adults in low-income working families worked an average of 2,552 hours per year in 2006, the equivalent of almost one and a quarter full-time workers per family. . . . Inadequate education plays a major role in preventing low-income workers from climbing the economic ladder. While almost half of all job openings require more than a high school education, 88 million adult workers are not prepared for these positions.

"The federal government has a role and responsibility to ensure that all hard-working families have a true opportunity for economic advancement and success," according to the report, which made four recommendations for federal policies to improve education, wages and job quality.

Additional report findings include:

- * In 13 states, 33 percent or more of working families are low-income, while in Mississippi and New Mexico, more than 40 percent of working families are low-income.

- * In 2006, California and Texas had more than a million low-income working families, while Florida and New York each had more than half a million.

- * In 13 states, 50 percent or more of minority working families are low-income.

- * Nationally, more than one in five jobs -- 22 percent -- pays wages that fall below the federal poverty threshold. In eight states, more than a third of all jobs are in poverty-wage occupations.

For more information go to www.workingpoorfamilies.org.

Seattle Post Intelligencer
Economic Boom Left Out Working Poor, but Bust Won't
Many Trapped in Low-Paying Jobs
By Paul Nyhan
October 15, 2008

Washington's working poor missed the economic growth of recent years -- their ranks remained largely unchanged -- and now they face an even grimmer future as the region teeters on the edge of a recession.

In 2006, a quarter of Washington families earned 200 percent or less than the federal poverty line -- \$42,400 for a family of four; essentially the same as four years earlier, according to a report released Tuesday by the Working Poor Family Project.

Although not officially in poverty, these families didn't earn enough to cover basic needs, according to the report, funded by the Anne E. Casey, Ford, Joyce and C.S. Mott foundations. Researchers said parents are struggling because wages for those on the bottom of the income ladder have stagnated and the gap between rich and poor has widened.

"These families are trapped in low-skill jobs that have had no relative wage increases in the last two decades," said Annie Keeney, executive director of the Seattle Jobs Initiative, which consulted with authors of the report.

Families also are trapped by a defining element of the modern economy: It creates a lot of low-paying and high-paying service jobs, but fewer blue-collar jobs that require only a high school diploma.

Nationally, 28 percent of families were deemed working poor in 2006, up from 27 percent in 2002 as parents spent more on housing and the number of low-paying jobs grew, the report found.

New Mexico ranked worst with 41 percent of working families considered low-income. New Hampshire had the lowest rate at 15 percent.

While the fortunes of low-wage workers worsened, the report paints a picture of those families that runs counter to some common beliefs. Struggling families typically worked more than 40 hours a week, while most were headed by parents who were 25 or older. Only a quarter received food stamps.

Around Seattle, evidence has mounted in recent years that lower-income families were struggling.

The Seattle Housing Authority has heard from parents who can't find affordable housing and are hard-pressed to deal with higher gasoline and food prices. Nonprofits are reporting greater demand for food and other services.

So far this year, Redmond-based Hopelink has seen a 71 percent jump in requests for emergency food bags compared with the same period a year ago. Meanwhile, the social services agency is dealing with a 68 percent spike in calls seeking help with housing.

Yet Washington is faring better than much of the country, ranked 13th among states with the smallest percentage of families falling at or below 200 percent of the poverty line -- a common definition of working poverty.

With financial markets collapsing, credit tight and home foreclosures mounting, the number of working-poor families is only expected to grow in coming months.

That's because fallout from Wall Street will blow through the rest of the U.S. economy in coming months, cutting deeply into economic growth.

Sen. Patty Murray said Tuesday in Seattle that she's already hearing from struggling retailers and other businesses coping with the slumping economy. After the \$700 billion bailout for financial firms, Murray now sees growing support for a package that would aid taxpayers.

"I do see more and more talk about a second stimulus" package, the Democratic senator said after listening to a briefing about local economic fallout by BuRSST for Prosperity, a new nonprofit fostering job training, business development and expanded educational support for low-income families.

Lawmakers are considering a national infrastructure program that would create jobs, an expansion of federal food stamps and an extension of unemployment benefits as part of a package that could cost \$150 billion to \$300 billion, Murray said.

To help financially strapped parents get better-paying jobs, anti-poverty advocates are sure to push for better and expanded job training and greater financial support for education.

"You are not going to get anywhere near a family-supporting wage if you are not getting post-secondary training," said Keeney of the Seattle Jobs Initiative.

Lawmakers may consider the taxpayer-focused effort when they return after the elections Nov. 4, but any aid may have to wait until the next president takes office in January.

Even when Congress turns its attention to Main Street, Marcia Meyers, director of the University of Washington's West Coast Poverty Center, worries the working poor will be forgotten.

"We have even less room in our attention span for the working poor," Meyers said.

**Kentucky Herald-Leader
Report Ranks Kentucky on Poverty Measures
Oct. 14, 2008**

The Working Poor Families Project, a group that advocates policies to benefit low-income working families, released a national study Tuesday that examines the economic health of such groups in all states.

In Kentucky, the group worked in partnership with the Mountain Association for Community Economic Development.

The report is available on MACED's Web site, www.maced.org/WPFP-release.htm. The report analyzed the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey 2006 and other bureau-produced reports. The report ranked all 50 states, with 1 being the best. Below are Kentucky's rankings for some categories:

32nd: Percentage of working families that are low-income — 30 percent in Kentucky. A low-income working family is defined as a family earning less than 200 percent of the poverty income threshold in 2006, which was \$41,228 for a family of four.

30th: Percentage of children in low-income working families — 34 percent.

18th: Income inequality of working families, defined as the ratio of income in the top fifth compared to bottom fifth — 7.9.

28th: Percentage of minority working families that are low-income — 47 percent.

43rd: Percentage of non-minority working families that are low-income — 28 percent.

7th: Percentage of low-income working families with housing costs accounting for more than one-third of their income — 44 percent.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution
Study: 3 in 10 Georgia Families Scrape to Get By
By Ariel Hart
October 14, 2008

Three in 10 working Georgia families still struggle to get by, according to a report issued Tuesday by a public policy study group.

“It used to be that if you worked hard with your muscle and showed up on time you could earn enough” to support a family, said Brandon Roberts, the principal author of the study produced by the Working Poor Families Project. “That’s increasingly no longer the case.”

The report counts how many working families are low-income, defined as making less than \$41,228 a year. The percentage of Georgia working families the report classified as low-income was also about 30 percent four years ago when the Working Poor Families Project last crunched the numbers. WFPF’s Web site says it was launched in 2002 by national philanthropic leaders who saw the need to strengthen state policies affecting working families. Both reports used 2-year-old data from the census, the latest available numbers.

The report often uses the term “low-income” instead of “poor” because the census’ definition of poverty is so narrow it is unrealistic, the authors say.

The figure of \$41,228 is double what the U.S. census defined as the poverty level for a family of four. In 2006 the census found that an average U.S. family of four was above the poverty level if it made more than \$20,614, or \$21,134 for a family with one child.

The study calls for more government investment in adult education so people can get better-paying jobs.

Among low-income working families in Georgia, 32 percent have no high school diploma or GED and 60 percent have no post-secondary education. That’s in the bottom 10 among the states, Roberts said.

The office of Gov. Sonny Perdue and the Georgia Chamber of Commerce didn’t respond to questions about the report. Benita Dodd, vice president of the free-market-focused

Georgia Public Policy Foundation, said Georgia was “doing an excellent job with adult education” and throwing government money at the problem was not the solution. She said Georgia’s technical colleges were working on partnerships with private companies that provide adult education and “I think we’re going to see major strides.”

Sarah Beth Gehl, deputy director of the Georgia Budget and Policy Institute, which works with the report’s authors, disagreed.

“When we look at how much Georgia spends on adult basic education per adult that lacks a GED, we are at the bottom of states,” she said.

The Baltimore-based Annie E. Casey Foundation helped fund the report. The foundation says it backs public policies that “more effectively meet the needs of today’s vulnerable children and families.”

The quality of the jobs available in the state may be a factor in Georgia’s ranking, Roberts said. In Georgia, 29.3 percent of jobs fall in occupations paying below the poverty level, putting the state in the bottom quarter of all states. The national average was 22.2 percent.

The 2004 report ranked the state as 30th in the nation in the percentage of low-income families, but this year’s report ranks Georgia 32nd. Nationwide, the new report found 350,000 more families fall into the low-income worker category than before.

“These are working families, they work hard, play by the rules,” said Roberts. They can generally pay the rent or mortgage and buy food, he said. Occasional events that set other families back a bit, such as a car breakdown or a sickness, “can really be a catastrophe” for low-income families, he said.

In this year’s report, New Hampshire ranked first, with only 15 percent of its families falling into the low-income working category. New Mexico came in last, with 41 percent. The national average was 28 percent.

The report notes that half of states have a minimum wage above the federal one, \$6.55 an hour. Georgia generally follows the federal minimum wage, but the state minimum wage of \$5.15 per hour applies to a small number of workers, Gehl said.

The Working Poor Families Project, <http://www.workingpoorfamilies.org>

The New Mexican
Report: N.M. has Highest Rate of Working Poor
By Sue Vorenberg
October 14, 2008

When it comes to low-income working families, New Mexico can't use the slogan "thank God for Mississippi" this time.

A new national report by the Working Poor Families Project ranked the Land of Enchantment 50th in two of its low-income rankings. About 41 percent of the population fits the group's definition of low-income working families, and 46 percent of the state's children fit that definition.

The group defines a low-income working family's earnings, based on the 2006 U.S. Census Bureau definition, as 200 percent of poverty income threshold, which averages \$41,228 for a family of four. The project used 2006 data for the report.

Mississippi, which might well be saying "thank God for New Mexico," came in 49th for its number of low-income working families, at 40 percent, and children in those families at 44 percent.

Nationally, about 28 percent of the population qualifies as low-income working families, and 33 percent of children qualify as living in those families.

"The stark reality is that too many American families have been experiencing an economic crisis long before" the recent stock market chaos, said Brandon Roberts, director of the group and author of the report "Still Working Hard, Still Falling Short."

The project sponsored a similar report in 2004 based on 2002 data, and since then, the statistics have only gotten worse nationwide, Roberts said. About 350,000 families have been added to those categories, and almost a million children, he said. "We believe this is more than is typically acknowledged by our government," Roberts said.

In "Working Hard, Falling Short," New Mexico ranked 49th in the nation for its number of low-income working families, at 39.5 percent of the population, and children in those families at 45.7 percent.

Mississippi ranked 50th in that report, with 42.5 percent of its population as low-income working families and 49 percent of its children in those families.

Considering the data for the new report comes from 2006, it's likely the numbers for 2008 are "even more alarming," he added.

The data was gathered from the American Community Survey 2006 and defines a family as either a married couple or single parent with at least one child under age 18. It defines

work as a combined family effort of 39 or more weeks at a job in the last 12 months.

The growing number of families fitting into those categories "is an example, we think, of a lack of serious commitment" by the government, Roberts said.

In New Mexico, a lot of the problems come down to economic development, said Gerry Bradley, research director of New Mexico Voices for Children. "It's an issue of the demand for labor and also an issue of working where people are living," Bradley said.

What would help is an increase in the minimum wage and improved access to support services like food stamps, Medicaid and child care support, he said.

For example, about 70 percent of the people eligible for food stamps here aren't getting them, he said.

"The labor movement is also relatively weak in New Mexico," Bradley said. "There's not many people in unions, particularly in the private sector."

Also, about half New Mexico's low-income working families don't have health insurance, according to the report.

The growing statistics also stem from a lack of education and educational support, Roberts said. "One of the key areas is the education and skills training of adults in these families," he said.

Many of the families are headed by parents who did not graduate from high school and did not get a general equivalency diploma, he said.

In New Mexico, 44 percent of the low-income working families have a parent who didn't graduate from high school or get a GED, and 23 percent of those families have a parent who never went to college.

"State policies and federal policies are really not up to the task" when it comes to providing enough educational assistance for those families, Roberts said.

Solutions will vary from state to state, but what the Working Poor Families Project would like to see initially is a national commission to investigate ways to support and improve the lot of those families, he said.

"This is an issue of national importance," Roberts said.

Connecticut Journal Inquirer
Report on State's Working Poor Reveals Education, Income Gap
By Don Michak
October 15, 2008

Connecticut is one of five states with the highest proportion of families whose incomes classify them as among the “working poor,” and about a third of those families are minorities, according to a new national report.

The report based on U.S. Census data says 16 percent of Connecticut’s working families are low-income and that about 11 percent have jobs in occupations paying below the federal poverty line, or \$41,228 for a family of four.

It also says that 56 percent of the parents in the state’s low-income families never went beyond high school and that 21 percent of the families have at least one parent who didn’t graduate from high school.

Moreover, it says that while Connecticut actually has the smallest percentage of low-income families, it ranks 49th out of the 50 states in income inequality when the top fifth of its population is compared to the bottom fifth.

The report, “Working Hard, Still Falling Short,” was produced with the backing of five private foundations by the Working Poor Families Project, a national initiative focused on state workforce policies involving adult education and skills training, economic development, and work supports.

The Hartford-based Connecticut Association for Human Services is one of the nonprofits among the two dozen state partners in the initiative, and the group says the report’s findings were troublesome and showed that while the state had increased the minimum wage, it hadn’t made necessary investments in other policies to support low-wage families.

The report’s findings document “the fundamental connection between education and income,” according to CAHS Executive Director Jim Horan.

“In our state, almost 60 percent of low-income working families have parents with no post-secondary education,” he said. “Despite the growing state deficit, we need to increase access to education and training for low-wage working parents. Without this attention, Connecticut’s economic divide will continue to grow unabated.”

The report also says that children account for 19 percent of the state’s low-income working families, that 70 percent of the families have housing costs greater than one-third of their incomes, and that 27 percent of the families lack health insurance.

Nationally, it says 42 million adults and children struggle to get by and that the number

of low-income families increased by 350,000 between 2002 and 2006.

The report also says 72 percent of low-income families work, that the average low-income family works one and a quarter jobs, that 52 percent of the families are headed by married couples, and that 69 percent have only American-born parents.

Similarly, it said 80 percent of low-income families have a parent between the ages of 25 and 54, that 43 percent have white, nonHispanic parents, and that 25 percent of the families receive food stamps.

Public News Service – Michigan

MI Report: Working Hard for the (little bit) of Money

By Deborah Smith and Craig Eicher

October 15, 2008

To listen: <http://www.publicnewsservice.org/index.php?/content/article/6740-1>

Lansing, MI - In Michigan, having a full-time job is no guarantee you'll make enough to cover the basics, according to a report from the "Working Poor Families Project." In fact, the number of working families with low incomes is on the rise, and one out of four such families is at the bottom of the salary ladder.

Judy Putnam with the *Michigan League for Human Services* says 300,000 working families, which include more than 600,000 children, are struggling to make ends meet -- even though their heads of household are working full-time.

"We're hearing a lot this election season about the middle-class worker, but it's these low-income families that we really must focus our attention on."

Putnam says Michigan's "No Worker Left Behind" project is one way to help families. Through it, workers can receive two-year grants for community college tuition to build their work skills for high-demand jobs. She says the problem is that the program is underfunded, with more than 9,000 on the waiting list.

Putnam says most people agree that a sense of fairness comes into play.

"You work hard and you work full-time. You shouldn't be wondering where your next meal is coming from."

Report author Brandon Roberts says it's important to remember that Michigan families lost ground on wages even before the current economic downturn.

"From 2002 to 2006, a period many considered to be one of robust economic growth, both the number and the percentage of low-income working families in this country increased."

Nationally, 42 million adults and children live in low-income working families.

**Gongwer News Service:
Report Says 26 Percent of Working Families are Low Income
October 14, 2008**

Michigan ranked 17th among all states in the proportion of working families who were classified as low-income in 2006, with 26 percent in that category, a national report released on Tuesday said. The report by the Working Poor Families Project also found 19 percent of Michigan jobs are in occupations that pay below the federal poverty level for a family of four.

Nationwide, the 42 million individuals in working low-income families represented an increase of 350,000 since 2002, the report showed. The report also covered education levels, racial makeup, housing costs and insurance coverage.

Sharon Parks, president of the Michigan League for Human Services, said the report shows more funding is needed for community college programs supported by the No Worker Left Behind project, where waiting lists exist, and for other programs to increase worker skills in high-demand occupations.

In Michigan, the report found 22 percent of low-income working families have at least one parent without a high school degree and 48 percent without any post-secondary education.

**Montgomery Advertiser, Alabama
States' Wealth Not Helping Families with Low Incomes
By Markeshia Ricks
October 15, 2008**

Hard times recently landed on the doorsteps of people with 401(k) plans and company health insurance, but those struggles are nothing new to low-income families.

Before the U.S. economy's recent nosedive, states like Alabama enjoyed several years of economic growth that kept their coffers flush with cash. But the growth didn't trickle down to the 33 percent of working families in Alabama who remained below the income level required to live without public assistance, according to a new report released Tuesday.

"In some respects we missed a golden opportunity to make investments in improvements for low-income working families," said Ron Gilbert, senior policy analyst for Arise Citizens' Policy Project. "We didn't increase funding in adult education, we didn't increase funding for education assistance. We did make some increase in subsidized child care, but that now has to be cut. It's just so frustrating because we could have chosen to make those investments."

The Working Poor Families Project, a national initiative supported by the Annie E. Casey, Ford, Joyce and C.S. Mott foundations, released "Still Working Hard, Still Falling Short," which found that one in four working families -- 42 million adults and children --

were deemed low-income in 2006. That means they made too little to meet their basic economic needs, and their ranks are growing.

Between 2002 and 2006, the number of working families who entered low-income status increased by 350,000 people, according to the report.

Ed Hatcher, president of the Washington, D.C.-based communications and public policy firm The Hatcher Group, said all eyes are focused on the current economic and financial crisis, but conditions have been deteriorating for the working poor long before this meltdown.

"It's been going on for many years," he said. "This report has important implications for policy makers."

Report co-author Brandon Roberts said the alarming news is that even when times were good, conditions were getting worse for working poor families and not better.

"During a four-year period, (2002-2006) which many consider to be solid, if not robust growth, both the number and presence of low-income, working families increased," he said. "If we could bring in the conditions of today and what's happening to working families now, these numbers would probably be going through the roof."

Roberts said federal and state governments have neglected to maintain the safety net that helps keep low-income families working and propels them out of low-income status. That safety net includes good policy that strengthens adult education and worker programs, he said.

"There is a need for more political will rather than knowing what to do," Roberts said. "There is no one single policy, no silver bullets. We must take action on a number of fronts."

How much political will might be aimed at helping the working poor remains to be seen during this election cycle, but the Working Poor Families Project is calling for the next president to take up the plight of low-income families by establishing a commission on their issues.

Even if the federal government began to take on the problems of low-income, working families, Gilbert said it is unlikely that Alabama would be in a position to benefit because of the major cuts the state is facing in education and social services.

Gilbert said it's remarkable to realize that many hoops were jumped through to pass a several-hundred-million-dollar bond issue for the ThyssenKrupp plant, but the state couldn't find the money to save subsidized child care for thousands of low-income, working parents.

"We're grateful for the cre-ation of new jobs," Gilbert said. "But it really speaks to the pri-arity of the government when the governor is ready to call a special session to pass incen-tives for Volkswagen, but we can't come up with \$5 million to allow families to receive subsi-dized child care and stay in the work force.

"All we can really hope for now is that we continue to rec-ognize the need to support low-income working families. When things improve, maybe then we will make some of our invest-ment in human capital and not invest it all in economic im-provement," he said.

Capital News Service

Md.'s Working Families Claim Second-Richest of the Poor

By Lindsey McPherson

October 14, 2008

Ran in:

Annapolis Capital

WTOP Radio

Southern MD Online

While many working families nationwide continue dropping below the poverty level, Maryland's families fare better than those of most states, according to a study by the Working Poor Families Project.

Only 16 percent of the state's working families with children are considered low-income, ranking second best in the United States, tying Connecticut and falling behind New Hampshire. The study considers a family low-income if it earns less than 200 percent of the poverty threshold defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, which in 2006 was \$41,228 for a family of four.

"Maryland is one of the most affluent states in the country, so that's the first thing I think we have to keep in mind, and that affluence is largely driven by a very educated group of adults who typically have not only just college degrees but graduate degrees and beyond, and that helps really drive the economy here," said Brandon Roberts, the project's director and one of the report's authors, in a conference call Tuesday.

The Working Poor Families Project is a national initiative that supports state non-profit groups' efforts to strengthen work force development, including the Jobs Opportunities Task Force in Maryland.

But University of Maryland sociology Professor Bart Landry said 16 percent is still a lot of working poor families.

"Even though they're working full-time, they still don't manage to get out of poverty," Landry said. "It seems to me a serious issue and one that, even though they did relatively better than some states, it's still not a very good record for the state. That any percentage that's that high among people who are working is pretty bad."

With the country embroiled in an economic crisis, the problem is likely to get worse, said Penn State sociology and demography Professor John Iceland.

"There are two things that might be at work here," he said. "For one, certainly hard economic times might cause some people to lose their jobs, and they might have to look for lower-wage jobs, so that could, on the one hand, serve to increase the proportions of all families that are working and poor, or it could just increase the number of people are not working and poor as well."

For those working Maryland families, the problem extends beyond their low wages. Many face higher housing costs, can't afford health insurance and do not have a high school or college degree.

"We do find, however, when you look behind the numbers and look at some of the issues affecting Maryland that there are some policy areas that really could be strengthened," Roberts said.

The report ranks Maryland the 40th worst state for the target group's housing costs -- 69 percent have housing costs greater than one-third of their income -- and 32nd worst for health coverage -- 39 percent of families have adults without health insurance.

Education is also a major problem for low-income families, Roberts said. One quarter of Maryland's low-income working families have a parent without a high school diploma or equivalent, and more than half have a parent without postsecondary education.

"The state in the past has not committed very significant resources to dealing with one of the problems I cited earlier, and that is adults without a high school degree," Roberts said. "Fortunately, in the last couple years, they've started giving some attention to that issue, additional resources, and they are making some efforts to strengthen the program."

Maryland also has poverty-assistance programs, such as a housing program that pays a significant portion of poor families' rents, Landry said. But the programs can't help everyone.

"Certainly, it does some good," Landry said. "The problem usually is that there isn't enough money in these programs to cover everyone who needs it and would qualify."

**New York Press and Sun-Bulletin
Working Poor Continue to Fall Behind**

By Cara Matthews

October 15, 2008

Also ran in:

Ithaca Journal

New York Democrat and Chronicle

ALBANY -- More than one in four working families in New York and nationwide don't earn enough to pay for housing, food, health care and other basic needs, according to a study released today.

New York ranks 21st out of the 50 states for the percentage of working families that qualify as low-income -- 27 percent had annual earnings below the \$41,228 federal poverty level for a four-member family in 2006. The state tied with Maine, Nevada and Ohio for 21st. The national average is 28 percent.

Other states in the Northeast fared better, including New Hampshire (15 percent), Massachusetts (17 percent), Rhode Island (22 percent), and Vermont (23 percent). With the meltdown on Wall Street in recent weeks, everyone is focused on the financial problems of the working poor, said Brandon Roberts, who wrote the report for the Working Poor Families Project. But the number of families in that category increased by 350,000 between 2002 and 2006, when the economy was considered solid, he said. New York is home to more than 500,000 low-income working families, and nearly 18 percent of the jobs are in occupations that pay below the federal poverty level for a family of four, the study found. The state ranked last in the nation for income inequality (meaning more disparity exists than in all other states), behind Connecticut, Texas and California.

"We think that the alarming news in our report is that even before this year's crisis, the conditions for working families were getting worse, not better," Roberts said. With the current economic downturn, the number of people in trouble likely is "going through the roof in almost every state in the country," he said. The report is based on U.S. Census statistics from 2006.

As New York leaders work to balance the state's budget, they need to remember that working families are trying to balance theirs too, said Karen Schimke, president and CEO of the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy, a state partner of the Working Poor Families Project.

The state's economic-development practices have not placed an emphasis on educating the workforce, she said.

"For the sake of our future, we've got to help working parents obtain the education and skills to get better jobs and contribute to our economy," she said.

The report said the federal and state governments should increase adult-education and skills programs; and hike wages, benefits and support for low-income working families.

Nearly half of all job openings require more than a high school degree, but 88 million adult workers don't have that, the study said. Federal and state resources for adult education meet about one-tenth of the need nationwide. Thirty-one percent of working-poor families in New York have at least one parent without a high school degree, and 58 percent have at least one parent without any post-secondary education, it said.

The state was 14th for the percentage of minority working families that are low-income -- 38 percent. Among the 13 states that have rates of 50 percent or higher are Mississippi (58 percent), Idaho (55 percent) and Louisiana (55 percent).

The organization has shared the report with the presidential candidates and hopes they will address issues about the working poor in the final weeks of the campaign, said Ed Hatcher, a spokesman for the group.

Other findings in the report are:

- * Thirty-one percent of children in New York live in low-income working families.
- * A quarter of low-income working families don't have health insurance in New York, and 69 percent of families pay more than one-third of their income for housing costs.
- * Seventy-two percent of low-income families work. Adults in low-income working families were on the job for an average of 2,552 hours in 2006, the equivalent of nearly 1.25 full-time workers.

Connecticut Courant
Working Poor Stuck In Low-Wage Limbo
By Dan Haar
October 16, 2008

Ernestine Mouzon, an empty-nest parent and former longtime machinist, has a phrase to describe the struggle of low-wage workers trying to get ahead.

"That 8 is still there," Mouzon says. "It just stays there. ... That 8 is still there."

She explains: \$8.23, \$8.35, \$8.41. You can move up by a few cents an hour, but for many people she knows, it's always 8-something. That's a slightly different perspective on the global financial meltdown.

Mouzon herself is a bit past the 8s, after decades working in New Haven-area factories. She's now at Covidien, the former U.S. Surgical, making knives and inspecting goods. She loves Covidien, not least because when a colleague nearly quit for lack of a baby sitter, the company found one for her.

Still, when Mouzon muses about what she ought to be making, it's \$14 or \$15 an hour. Even that lofty pay would put her under the working poor threshold, double the national poverty level.

Covidien offers hope for advancement, but for now, after two years at the North Haven plant, Mouzon is no better paid than she was a decade ago in a previous job.

She is not alone. A new report by the Working Poor Families Project shows that in 2006, one in six Connecticut families in which an adult held a job was mired at or below the working poor threshold.

Amazingly, the figure was statistically unchanged from the working poor percentage in 2002 — despite an alleged effort by state policymakers to cut child poverty in half by 2014, and more to the point, despite an economic boom during those four years.

As we endure the Great Financial Meltdown of 2008, as we watch yet another 700-plus point drop in the Dow, it's worth thinking about the picture for low-wage earners. The boom that never was is over, and now a recession brings new levels of fear.

"This is the hardest it's ever been to get a job," said Darice Hill, Mouzon's neighbor at a public housing complex. "Even at McDonald's."

Hill is just 20, but he's a six-year veteran of the low-wage job market. The father of a toddler worked two jobs as he attended Briarwood College in 2007-08, but he couldn't afford to stay in school.

Hill has noticed wages stagnating for years, as he has toiled at fast food joints. The recession, he said, "shows me I really need to keep going to school and get a degree."

In Connecticut, the number of working poor families rose from 61,000 to 68,500 between 2002 and 2006, the report shows; nationwide, it's up 350,000 to 9.5 million — 28 percent of all working families. This, in a boom. The report for 2010 will reveal a disaster.

At 16 percent, Connecticut was among the states with the fewest working poor, although costs are higher here.

"Where we are behind is in investing in job skills and training for low-wage workers," said Maggie Adair, policy director at the Connecticut Association for Human Services, which works with the Working Poor Families Project.

Helping people advance is right and noble, but a troubling question lies underneath: Why has pay stagnated, especially near the bottom of the scale, even in good times?

Weaker bargaining power, eroding government support and other standard answers don't quite explain it. For the people who never had houses and year-end bonuses to lose in the first place, the Wall Street bailouts are at best a distant drumbeat.

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
Pennsylvania Ranks High in Working Poor
By Ann Belser
October 15, 2008

Pennsylvania is ranked 13th in the nation for the number of low-income working families.

But that is not considered good news by Marianne Bellesorte, the policy director of Pathways PA. She pointed out that while 24 percent of the working families in the commonwealth qualify as low-income, nationally 28 percent of all working families are classified as low-income.

The news was contained in a report called "Working Hard, Still Falling Short," which was released nationally yesterday by the Working Families Project. Pathways PA compiled the statistics for the state.

Ms. Bellesorte said Pathways PA found that 56 percent of the families in the state had at least one parent who had not continued his or her education past high school and 20 percent of the families include a parent with no high school diploma. Yet, only 19 percent of the jobs in the state do not require schooling past high school, and 51 percent of jobs require either a certificate or some sort of post-secondary education.

"We have so many adults in Pennsylvania who stopped at high school, which was a good thing to do not so long ago," she said. Back then people could go straight from high school to manufacturing, but even those jobs now require more education.

Low-income families are defined as those who earn at least 200 percent of the federal poverty level. A working family was defined as a family with children in which at least one parent worked 39 weeks of the last year, or for six months and then looked for work the rest of the year. Ms. Bellesorte said the average working family, in fact, had adults who worked one-and-a-quarter jobs for the entire year.

A report prepared by Pathways PA also measured the sufficiency standard, which is the amount of money a family needs to make ends meet, taking into account the costs of housing, child care, food, transportation, health insurance and taxes.

For instance, in Pittsburgh that standard for a family with two adults, one school-age child and a preschooler was \$49,573 or 234 percent of the poverty level. The cost of sufficiency was even higher in the rest of Allegheny County where it was 250 percent of the poverty level, or \$52,958 for the same family.

Ed Hatcher, a spokesman for the Working Families Project, said that while the focus these past few weeks has been on the stock market, "conditions for working families have been deteriorating long before the current Wall Street meltdown and have been deteriorating for years."

"Government no longer works well for our working families," said Brandon Roberts, one of the authors of the national report.

He said a third of all children live now in low-income working families and that the number of jobs that pay poverty level wages increased by 4.7 million over the last four years.

"More has to be done on both the federal and state level to address the needs of low income working families," Mr. Roberts said.

Spotlight on Poverty and Opportunity

Spotlight Interview: A Closer Look at the State of America's Working Families

October 14, 2008

Spotlight interviewed Brandon Roberts, author of a major new study, *Still Working Hard, Still Falling Short: New Findings on the Challenges Confronting America's Working Families*. The study looks at the continuing rise in the number of low-income working families and the staggering increase in income inequality.

The report, which was released by the Working Poor Families Project, found that one out of four working families are low-income. It also provides in-depth national and state data on low-income working families and the challenges they face, including information about education levels, racial makeup, the number of children, housing costs and health insurance coverage.

Full interview: <http://spotlightonpoverty.org/news.aspx?id=23fc0e29-85c6-4165-b54e-e5d9d496b21b>

Wisconsin State Journal

Poverty Hits State's Minority Working Families Hard, Report Says

By Sandy Cullen

October 14, 2008

Almost half of Wisconsin's minority working families are not earning enough to meet their basic needs, according to a new national report. Overall, 24 percent of working families in Wisconsin were identified as low-income. But among minority working families, that number was nearly double at 47 percent.

"The national economic crisis is not just a problem for Wall Street, it is a problem for Wisconsin's hard working families," said Laura Dresser, associate director of the Center on Wisconsin Strategy at UW-Madison.

Nationwide, more than one in four working families — or 42 million adults and children — didn't earn enough in 2006 to meet basic needs, according to the report "Still Working Hard, Still Falling Short," a follow-up to the 2004 report "Working Hard, Falling Short."

The report found that between 2002 and 2006, 350,000 more working families became low-income during a period of economic expansion, suggesting those numbers will keep growing during the current economic downturn.

Over the same period, the number of jobs paying poverty-level wages increased by 4.7 million, the report said. In Wisconsin, 20 percent of jobs paid below poverty level in 2006.

A low-income family is defined as earning less than twice the poverty level. In 2006, the poverty level was \$20,614 for a family of four, putting the low-income threshold at \$41,228.

The report was produced by the Working Poor Families Project, a national initiative supported by the Annie E. Casey, Ford, Joyce, and C.S. Mott Foundations.

It also found:

- 28 percent of Wisconsin children live in low-income working families.
- 21 percent of low-income working families in Wisconsin have at least one parent without a high school degree, and 50 percent have at least one parent without any post-secondary education.
- 19 percent of low-income working families in Wisconsin have no health insurance.

In addition, 59 percent of low-income working families in the state have housing costs greater than one-third of their income, an increase of more than 10 percent from 2002.

Deedra Atkinson, senior vice president for the United Way of Dane County, said the report debunks myths about low-income families, showing that 72 percent have members who work and 52 percent are headed by married couples. She emphasized the importance of making sure that children have the skills needed to start kindergarten and that students graduate from high school and receive additional training, particularly for fields such as biotechnology, where jobs are being created.

John Keckhaver, a research analyst with the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families who focuses on work force development, said two things the state could do better is combine basic adult education with job training programs and make financial aid more available to working adults who need enhanced job skills.

Dresser said that while Wisconsin "looks relatively good" compared to other states, one in five families experience "a lot of stress and a lot of hard decisions" because of their income level, and with the decline in jobs and other economic factors over the last year, that will only get worse.

In some areas, particularly for minority working families, Wisconsin fares poorly, Dresser said. "Our whites tend to do very well, while minorities, especially African-Americans, tend to do badly."

Georgia Public Television – PBS
Interview with Sarah Beth Gehl, Georgia Budget and Policy Institute
October 26, 2008

Working Hard, Falling Short – A new report shows that 30% of Georgia's working families are low-income and that they are falling further and further behind as the economy worsens. The statistics also dispel many myths about the state's low-income families. Sarah Beth Gehl of the Georgia Budget and Policy Institute joins us with the details.

Watch: <http://www.gpb.org/georgiaweekly/2008/10/26>

WEAU-TV, NBC – Eau Claire, Wisconsin
Wisconsin's Working Families

Nearly a quarter of working families in Wisconsin are low income. That information is from a new national report by the Working Poor Families Project.

The report shows Wisconsin is ranked 13th in the nation for the number of poor working families. The report also shows 47-percent of minority families that are working are low-income.

And while the report shows 19-percent of Wisconsin's working poor families don't have health insurance, we're faring better than 47 other states in that category.

Islam Online, Qatar
More Americans Survive on Food Stamps
October 15, 2008

WASHINGTON — With the financial crisis eating into their savings and causing massive layoffs, an alarming number of Americans is being forced to survive on food stamps against rising food prices and high petrol costs.

"We've seen an increased participation in the food stamps program which is a critical component of the safety net here," James Ziliak, director of the Center for Poverty Research at the University of Kentucky, told Agence France-Presse (AFP) on Wednesday, October 15.

"The food stamps program is very sensitive to changes in the overall economy."

Food stamps date back to 1943, and are part of a federal program that gives very low-income families an average allowance of 95 dollars per month to spend on groceries.

The sum is distributed on to debit cards which can be used in supermarkets across the country, and recipients are also eligible to claim free school meals for their children.

The federal program, which costs the government \$30 billion a year, covered more than 29 millions in July, one million over just three months earlier, according to Department of Agriculture figures.

The figure is expected to reach a new record this summer because of the ongoing financial turmoil cause by the collapse of Wall Street giants and a credit crisis.

US Labor department statistics show that some 159,000 jobs were shed in September, as the weight of the housing collapse and credit crunch hit a broad swath of industries.

Americans are struggling to keep pace with surging unemployment, rising food prices and high petrol costs.

At the same time, traditional routes for new credit have been closed to many, with banks reining in on overdraft limits and credit card thresholds.

The number of Americans benefiting from the food stamps program reached a historic high of 29.85 million in 2005 in the wake of the devastating Hurricane Katrina.

Brandon Roberts, author of a Working Poor Families Project report, insists working families have been suffering from financial woes for long.

"Understandably, all eyes today are focused on the financial and economic crisis affecting America's working families," he said.

"But the stark reality is that America's working families have been in economic crisis long before this year."

Roberts' report said one in four working families became low-income citizens, earning too little to meet their basic needs.

According to the Census Bureau, more than 37 million Americans live below the poverty line, which is now set at 21,000 dollars per year for a family of four.

Yet, for most Americans, notably from working echelons, the food stamps program is not enough.

"Sometimes I have to ask somebody to buy me a little food or something," says Karen Johnson, 54, who receives 81 dollars a month in food stamps for herself and her 17-year-old daughter.

"I hate to ask people, 'Can I have some bread? Can I have some hamburger meat?' It's kind of rough on me sometimes."

BLOG ENTRIES

New York Times Blog

Low-Income Working Families Under Strain

<http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/10/14/more-strain-found-for-low-income-working-families>

Think Progress

<http://thinkprogress.org/2008/10/15/thinkfast-october-15-2008>

Venture

Florida's Low Wages Hammer Working Families

<http://blogs.tampabay.com/venture/2008/10/wake-up-and-g-6.html>

Connecticut News Junkie

Working Poor in Connecticut

http://www.ctnewsjunkie.com/general_news/working_poor_in_connecticut.php

Weblosky

The Working Poor

<http://weblosky.com/2008/10/15/the-working-poor/>

Peach Pundit

3 in 10 is Bad but Could be Worse

<http://www.peachpundit.com/2008/10/15/3-in-10-is-bad-but-could-be-worse/>

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Growing Numbers of Workers are Poor, Study Finds

<http://www.buzzflash.net/story.php?id=75017>

Poverty News Blog

The Working Poor in America Still Falling Behind

<http://povertynewsblog.blogspot.com/2008/10/working-poor-in-america-still-falling.html>

Blog Talk Radio

Working Toward Poverty

<http://www.blogtalkradio.com/TheJobLab/2008/10/15/Working-Toward-Poverty-Underemployment-Working-Mothers-1>