10 Poverty Myths, Busted

*No, single moms aren't the problem. And neither are absentee dads.*

By Erika Eichelberger | Tue Mar. 25, 2014 5:00 AM EDT

**Social Title:**

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**1. Single moms are the problem.** Only 9 percent of low-income, urban moms have been single throughout their child's first five years. Thirty-five percent were married to, or in a relationship with, the child's father for that entire time.*

**2. Absent dads are the problem.** Sixty percent of low-income dads see at least one of their children daily. Another 16 percent see their children weekly.*

**3. Black dads are the problem.** Among men who don't live with their children, black fathers are more likely[1] than white or Hispanic dads to have a daily presence in their kids' lives.

**4. Poor people are lazy.** In 2004, there was at least one adult with a job in 60 percent of families[2] on food stamps that had both kids and a nondisabled, working-age adult.

**5. If you're not officially poor, you're doing okay.** The federal poverty line for a family of two parents and two children in 2012 was $23,283[3]. Basic needs cost at least twice that[4] in 615 of America's cities and regions.

**6. Go to college, get out of poverty.** In 2012, about 1.1 million people who made less than $25,000 a year, worked full time, and were heads of household had a bachelor's degree.**

**7. We're winning the war on poverty.** The number of households with children living on less than $2 a day per person has grown 160 percent[5] since 1996, to 1.65 million families in 2011.

**8. The days of old ladies eating cat food are over.** The share of elderly single women living in extreme poverty jumped 31 percent[6] from 2011 to 2012.

**9. The homeless are drunk street people.** One in 45 kids[7] in the United States experiences homelessness each year. In New York City alone, 22,000 children are homeless[8].

**10. Handouts are bankrupting us.** In 2012, total welfare funding[9] was 0.47 percent of the federal budget[10].

*Source: Analysis by Dr. Laura Tach at Cornell University.

**Source: Census**
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