

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:

10 poverty myths, busted

- 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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Links:

- [1] <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhsr/nhsr071.pdf>
- [2] http://www.cbpp.org/cms/?fa=view&id=3894#_ftn3
- [3] <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/13poverty.cfm>
- [4] <http://www.epi.org/resources/budget/>
- [5] http://www.npc.umich.edu/publications/policy_briefs/brief28/policybrief28.pdf
- [6] <http://www.nwlc.org/resource/insecure-unequal-poverty-among-women-and-families-2000-2012>
- [7] <http://www.familyhomelessness.org/children.php?p=ts>
- [8] <http://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/pages/basic-facts>
- [9] <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/?fa=view&id=3808>
- [10] <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/search/pagedetails.action?packageId=BUDGET-2013-BUD>