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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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
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