

Nearly two-thirds of Americans live in poverty at some point: study

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Almost one-quarter spend five years or more in poverty, researchers find.

Many Americans will live in poverty at some point in their lives, a new study shows.

Researchers looked at national data collected since 1968 and concluded that between the ages of 25 and 60, almost two-thirds of Americans will live in poverty for a year. Poverty was defined as living under the 20th percentile of income distribution, the study noted. About 42 percent of Americans will have a year of [extreme poverty](#)—that's below the 10th percentile of income distribution, the researchers said.

What's more, nearly 25 percent will live through five or more years of poverty, and more than 11 percent will live in five or more years of extreme poverty, the study found.

"The numbers we found are higher than those we originally expected to find," study author Mark Rank, a professor of [social welfare](#) at Washington University in St. Louis, said in a university news release. Rank conducted the study with Thomas Hirschl, a professor of development sociology at Cornell University, in Ithaca, N.Y.

A number of factors were linked to living in poverty or extreme poverty for a year. People who were younger, female, nonwhite, or single were more likely to have a year of poverty or extreme poverty. People with 12 years or less of education, and those who had a work disability were also more likely to have a year of poverty or extreme poverty, the study revealed.

The study was published recently in the journal *PLoS ONE*.

"Our previous work has shown that the typical American has a one in nine chance of joining the wealthiest 1 percent of the [income distribution](#) for at least one year in her or his working life," Rank said.

"We knew that there would be a large number of Americans on the other end of the spectrum, but this research shows specifically how wide that [income gap](#) really is," he added.

More information: The Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin-Madison has more about [poverty](#).

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