

## SIEL 2

The phenomenon of poverty demonstrates the inequality in the United States because it reflects the inequality in the distribution of money and other resources in different ethnic communities. According to the Census Bureau's report on Poverty in the United States: 2024, the poverty rate in the United States in 2024 was 10.6%, meaning that in the year 2024, 35.9 million people in the United States were poor (Shrider & Bijou, 2025). However, it also tells us that poverty rates across communities are different. The poverty rate for Asian-Americans in 2024 was 7.5%, and the poverty rate for Hispanic or Latino American communities was 15.0%. This demonstrates the gap in the poverty levels in different communities.

The Census Bureau has been employing a poverty measure since the 1960s, where it compares pretax money income with a poverty line based on family size and composition (Shrider & Bijou, 2025). This provides a single federal standard for evaluating poverty. Using this, the poverty levels among Asian-Americans are lower than the national average of 10.6%, and Hispanic or Latino Americans have poverty levels much higher than the national average (Shrider & Bijou, 2025). Essentially, this means that Hispanics or Latino Americans have double the likelihood of experiencing poverty as Asian Americans. This proves an unequal distribution of income, opportunities, and economic well-being.

One thing that was learned is that poverty is not a moral issue but a structural issue. This means that it isn't just caused by the unwillingness to work or simply bad choices. It is caused by bigger issues, like education, employment, healthcare, immigration, and discrimination. This is evident in the census data, which shows certain groups are more likely to be poor. This is true with the Hispanic or Latino American population. This population may have a larger rate of poverty due to issues with steady employment, wages that are lower in certain jobs, wealth

accumulated over generations, and access to good schools and healthcare. This is not a moral issue but a structural one. Therefore, the fact that the rate of poverty is higher among the Hispanic or Latino American population demonstrates how inequality can become embedded in society.

At the same time, we shouldn't oversimplify the fact that the poverty rate for Asian Americans is lower. One of the big things that was learned was the way in which large groups can mask large differences within those groups. "Asian Americans" encompasses a large group of individuals who may have had very different reasons for coming to the country, may be more or less educated, may speak very different languages, and may have very different economic levels. The Census Bureau points out that "larger sample sizes allow the survey to provide more detailed information about smaller groups" (Shrider & Bijou, 2025). Even if we're looking at a group with a lower poverty rate overall, we shouldn't assume that this means the communities within this group aren't struggling.

The same idea can be applied to the category of Hispanic or Latino Americans. Even though the overall category of Hispanic or Latino Americans had a poverty rate of 15.0%, this does not mean that all those in this category have the same experiences. However, the overall category is important because it continues to demonstrate inequality. Stratification often stresses the point that ethnicity and race affect class. Poverty rates are an important tool to demonstrate this.

As the Census Bureau report indicates, the official poverty rate decreased from 2023 to 2024 for White Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanic Americans (Shrider & Bijou, 2025). This tells us that poverty rates have gone down. However, this does not mean that the inequality has. Even if the poverty rate decreases for Asian Americans and Hispanic Americans, the gap

between 7.5% and 15.0% remains large. Improvement does not mean the conditions must be better for everyone.

According to the Census Bureau report, racial and ethnic groups experience poverty differently. Asian Americans have an official rate of 7.5%, while Hispanic or Latino Americans have an official rate of 15.0% (Shrider & Bijou, 2025). This tells us that poverty can be caused by inequality and unequal access to opportunities. This understanding of poverty can help us understand inequality in American society.

Jeffery Nguyen

## References

Shrider, E. A., & Bijou, C. (2025, August 13). *Poverty in the United States: 2024*. Census.gov.

<https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2025/demo/p60-287.html>

Jeffery Nguyen