



Public Policy

News

www.okpolicy.org

For Immediate Release
Aug. 30, 2005

Contact: Heather Ann Hope
918-382-3265 or 918-607-2923

Oklahoma Sees Decline in Poverty Rate;
State Now Has Third Highest Rate of Uninsured

TULSA – The number of Oklahomans living in poverty declined in 2004 according to data released today by the U.S. Census Bureau. However, the data also show another increase in the number of people in the state without health insurance. Oklahoma now ranks third in the nation in the rate of uninsured at 20.1%.

“We are pleased to see the poverty rate in Oklahoma decrease,” said Monica Barczak, Community Action Project senior research analyst. “At the same time we are very concerned about the continued growth in the number of Oklahomans without health insurance. Being without health insurance leaves families one medical emergency away from falling into poverty,” Barczak said.

The U.S. Census Bureau data show Oklahoma’s poverty rate dropped from 13.5% in 2002-2003 to 11.8% in 2003-2004. Oklahoma is one of three states with the steepest drop in poverty.

“Oklahoma is clearly making inroads into helping people move out of poverty. However, let’s remember that there are still 400,000 Oklahomans living below the poverty line, which is just over \$19,000 for a family of four,” Barczak said. “Poverty rates for children – and particularly for those under five years old – remain disturbingly high.”

According to the Census Bureau data, the number of uninsured jumped significantly from 18.8% in 2002-2003 to 20.1% in 2003-2004.

“We know it’s getting more difficult for people to get insurance through their employers,” Barczak said. “These new data confirm that more and more Oklahomans are falling into the ranks of the uninsured. This problem will only get worse if federal and state policymakers cut key healthcare programs like Medicaid to balance their budgets.”

The survey also shows a slight increase in median household income in Oklahoma, which rose from \$37,581 in 2002-2003 to \$38,274 in 2003 to 2004. Oklahoma’s median household income now ranks 42nd highest in the nation.

See tables below for detailed data.

Community Action Project (CAP) is a Tulsa-based comprehensive anti-poverty agency whose mission is to help individuals and families in need achieve self-sufficiency. CAP’s public policy department aims to promote policies that will benefit low- and moderate-income Oklahomans through research, education and advocacy.

###

Community Action Project • 717 S. Houston Ave. • Tulsa, OK 74127
www.okpolicy.org



Table 1: Percentage of People in Poverty, OK vs. U.S., 1996-2004, 2-yr. Averages

Source: Current Population Survey

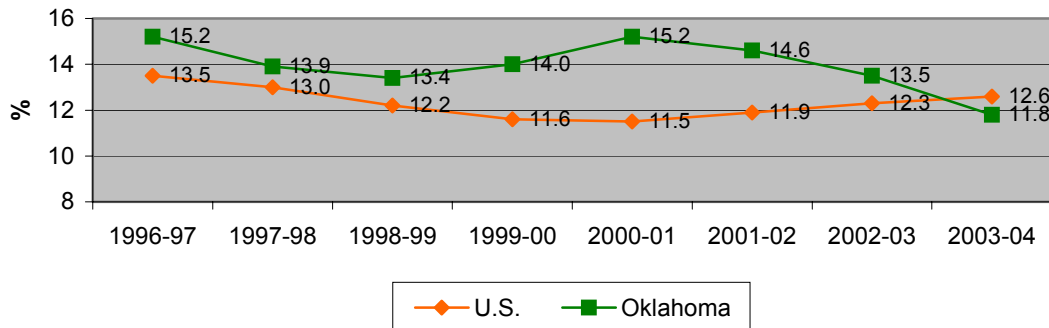


Table 2: Poverty Rates by Age, Oklahoma, 2004

Source: American Community Survey

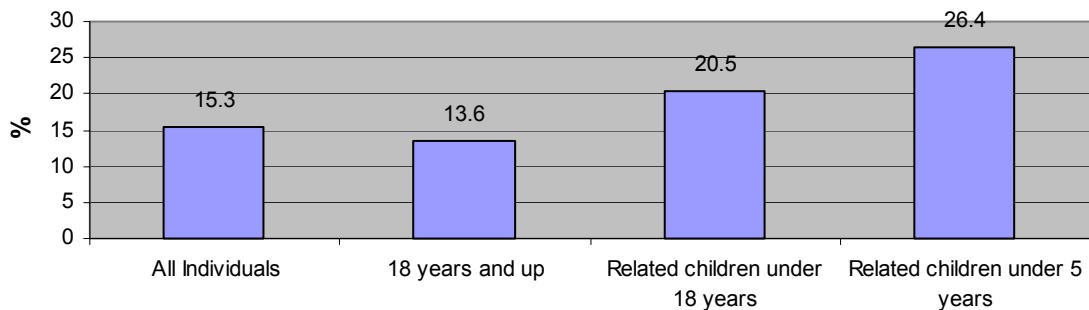


Table 3: Percent of Population without Health Insurance, OK vs. U.S., 1996 to 2004, 2-yr. Averages

Source: Current Population Survey

