UNLEASHING OPPORTUNITY:
WHAT CAN TEXAS LEARN FROM U.S. POVERTY RELIEF EFFORTS?

by Vance Ginn, Ph.D.

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Key Points

- Poverty is often misunderstood, despite roughly $25 trillion (adjusted for inflation) having been spent to reduce it by governments in the U.S. since the 1960s' Great Society.
- Using income to measure quality of living for those in poverty is misleading as ample assistance is available through a robust social safety net provided by federal and state governments.
- Despite the allocation of so many resources, the war on poverty has been a failure as the U.S. poverty rate has been about the same since the 1960s.
- Texas and the U.S. need a new holistic approach to mitigate poverty that provides opportunities for self-sufficiency and a more robust economy.

Executive Summary

The official poverty rate in the U.S. was 11.4% in 2020, with an estimated 37.2 million people living in poverty (Shrider et al., 2021). The rate in Texas was slightly higher at 13.4%, or 3.9 million people (Census Bureau, n.d.). Despite more than 80 federal safety-net programs aimed at reducing poverty in Texas and across the nation (Government Accountability Office, 2015), the Lone Star State's poverty rate is and has historically been higher than the national average. Nationally, about $25 trillion (adjusted for inflation) have been spent to combat poverty since 1964 when President Lyndon B. Johnson's "war on poverty" engendered the Great Society. However, the country's poverty rate was declining before 1964 but remained virtually unchanged since then, suggesting a failure of these redistributionist measures.

Research has repeatedly identified key institutions and factors that contribute to keeping people in poverty. These determinants are a combination of human behavior as well as geographic and economic circumstances and are highly correlated with poverty over time. Given this reality—and the fact that the scarce taxpayer money spent on government programs over nearly 60 years has not substantially reduced poverty—a logical step forward is to reconsider these drivers of poverty to shed some light on how existing governmental safety-net programs are addressing the problem.

This paper provides a summary of governmental statistics on poverty, an overview of the types of assistance available to Texans in poverty, and a literature review of the contributing factors to poverty in Texas and nationwide. Better understanding these issues—along with the institutional framework necessary to improve opportunities to mitigate poverty—can lead to a holistic path forward to persistent poverty relief so that more people can be self-sufficient and flourish.

Overview of Poverty in the U.S. and Texas

The 1920–21 recession was the last major economic downturn in American history that was not met with federal intervention designed to stabilize the economy and mitigate poverty (Grant, 2015). A decade later, Presidents Herbert Hoover and Franklin Delano Roosevelt presided over the first large-scale and nationwide anti-poverty measures[1] during the 1930s, a period that usurped the title of "The Great Depression" from the Panic of 1873. Despite these large-scale interventions, the unemployment rate remained in double digits for the remainder of the 1930s: More people were dependent on new government programs, and the costly economic effects of these and other government

1 Many of those programs, like Social Security, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC)—which was changed to the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) in 1996—and early housing programs, still exist.

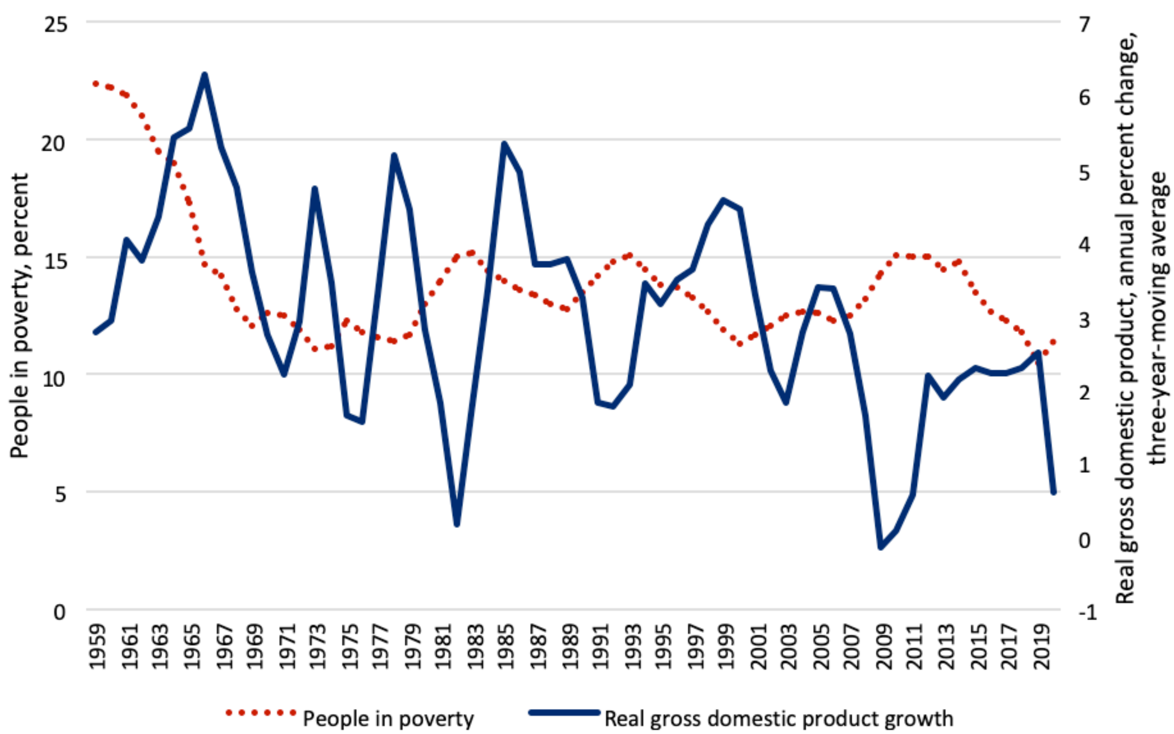
actions reduced the productive capacity and job creation across the nation (Powell, 2003; [Reed, 2011](#)). A quarter century later, President Lyndon B. Johnson advocated in his "war on poverty" for a body of domestic policy initiatives commonly called "The Great Society." A primary objective of these initiatives was to end poverty, which was already rapidly declining. This intervention by the Johnson administration and the 89th Congress[2] surpassed those by Hoover and Roosevelt. However, the Great Society poverty relief programs did not substantially accelerate the poverty rate's reduction—in fact, the rate of decline slowed before essentially stalling. The poverty rate has been negatively correlated with economic growth (**Figure 1**) but was also at approximately the same rate in 2020 as in 1974, 46 years later. In the 50 years following President Johnson's "war on poverty," means-tested anti-poverty spending is roughly $25 trillion (in constant 2018 dollars; Sheffield & Rector, 2014 and author's calculations).

Official Poverty Measure

To define the official poverty measure, the U.S. Census Bureau provides an estimated income threshold annually. When a family's income falls below this estimated income threshold (**Figure 2**) through the following methodology, they are considered to be in poverty:

> If a family's total money income is less than the applicable threshold, then that family and every individual in it are considered to be in poverty. The official poverty thresholds are updated annually for inflation using the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U). The official poverty definition uses money income *before taxes or tax credits and excludes capital gains and noncash benefits (such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits and housing assistance)* [emphasis added]. The thresholds do not vary geographically. (Shrider et al., 2021, p. 51)

Figure 1
U.S. Poverty Rates and Business Cycles



Note. Census Bureau data on poverty begin in 1959. Other estimations on poverty exist for previous years and show that poverty was declining even before 1959. However, since the methodology used to derive those estimates is different from that of the Census Bureau, those data are excluded from this figure for consistency. Data from *Income and Poverty in the United States: 2020*, by E. A. Shrider, M. Kollar, F. Chen, and J. Semega, Census Bureau, 2021 (https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2021/demo/p60-273.pdf) and *Real Gross Domestic Product*, Bureau of Economic Analysis, n.d. (https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/GDPC1).

2 These programs include Medicare, Medicaid, and others.

Figure 2
Who Qualifies as Being in Poverty?

Poverty Thresholds for 2020 by Size of Family and Number of Related Children Under 18 Years
(In dollars)

Size of family unit	Related children under 18 years								
	None	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six	Seven	Eight or more
One person (unrelated individual):									
Under age 65	13,465								
Aged 65 and older	12,413								
Two people:									
Householder under age 65	17,331	17,839							
Householder aged 65 and older	15,644	17,771							
Three people	20,244	20,832	20,852						
Four people	26,695	27,131	26,246	26,338					
Five people	32,193	32,661	31,661	30,887	30,414				
Six people	37,027	37,174	36,408	35,674	34,582	33,935			
Seven people	42,605	42,871	41,954	41,314	40,124	38,734	37,210		
Eight people	47,650	48,071	47,205	46,447	45,371	44,006	42,585	42,224	
Nine people or more	57,319	57,597	56,831	56,188	55,132	53,679	52,366	52,040	50,035

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Note. Reproduced from *Income and Poverty in the United States: 2020*, by E. A. Shrider, M. Kollar, F. Chen, and J. Semega, Census Bureau, 2021, p. 51 (https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2021/demo/p60-273.pdf).

Figure 2 provides the federal government's matrix used to identify various family units' poverty thresholds relying on household composition and income.

There are flaws with this measure. First, the official poverty threshold does not consider the myriad safety-net programs (discussed later) that elevate a person's standard of living, therefore it does not fully reflect the income or consumption of a recipient of these programs, nor does it reflect other non-material factors (Meyer & Mittag, 2015). Moreover, instances of underreporting of both income and federal assistance, nonresponses to the survey to determine data, and the lack of a connection to administrative, verifiable data present an incomplete picture. Further, given the cost of living varies widely from place to place, the same income can provide very different standards of living depending on the geographic region. Finally, the CPI-U is an imperfect measure to account for the basket of general goods and services a typical urban consumer would consume because its static inputs do not account for changes in consumer behavior and new, improved goods. This miscalculation of consumer prices can then lead to further misclassification of living standards (Eberstadt, 2008; Meyer et al., 2015). Nevertheless, having a basic benchmark, although imperfect, is necessary to at least begin a discussion about poverty.

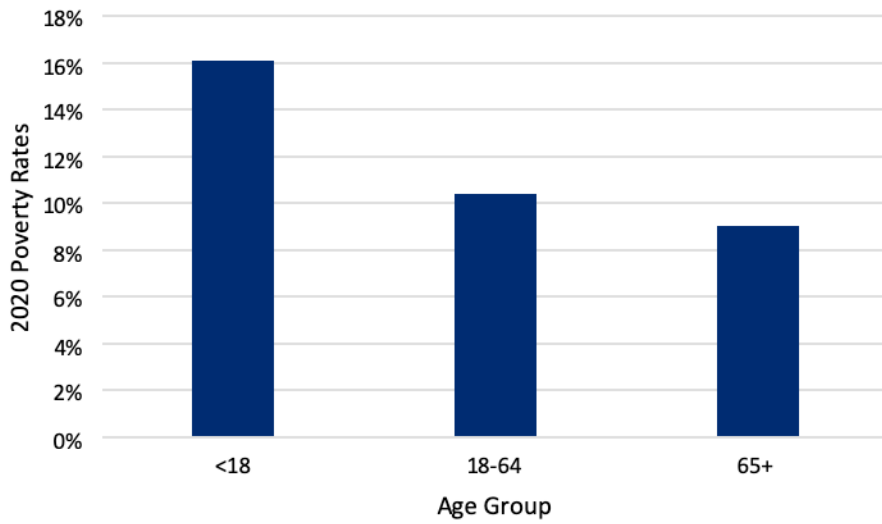
Poverty Rates

Using these thresholds, the Census Bureau calculates poverty rates for different demographics. **Figure 3** shows how the official poverty rate declines with age. **Figure 4** illustrates the disparities regarding educational attainment. About one quarter of those with no high school diploma are in poverty, which is about twice the rate of those who finish high school but do not attend college (Shrider et al., 2021). Those who attend some college have only one third the poverty rate of those with no high school diploma, and those with at least a bachelor's degree have a poverty rate one eighth of those with no high school diploma. **Figure 5** notes the disparities by race as well, with the poverty rate for Blacks (19.5%) being nearly twice as high as the rate for Whites (10.1%). The poverty rate for Asians (8.1%) is about 20% less than that for Whites and slightly less than for White non-Hispanics (8.2%; Shrider et al., 2021).

Poverty rates also diverge sharply based on family status (**Figure 6**). Married couples have a poverty rate of just 4.7%, less than half the national average. Conversely, a single-mother-headed household with a child under the age of 6 has a poverty rate of 46.2%, nearly 10 times the rate of married couples. The disparity is lower for single-father-headed households with a child under the age of 6, which average a 17.9% poverty rate (Shrider et al., 2021).

Figure 3

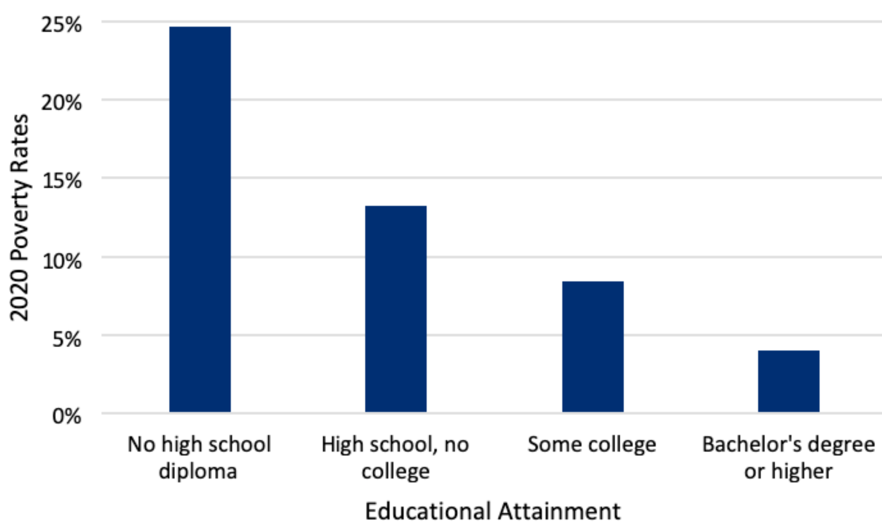
Poverty Rates by Age Group



Note. Data from *Income and Poverty in the United States: 2020*, by E. A. Shrider, M. Kollar, F. Chen, and J. Semega, Census Bureau, 2021 (https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2021/demo/p60-273.pdf).

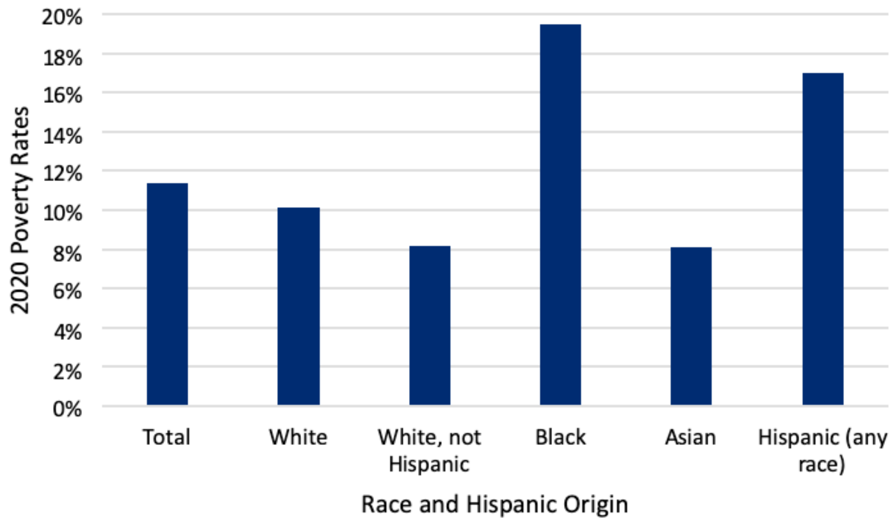
Figure 4

Poverty Rates by Educational Attainment



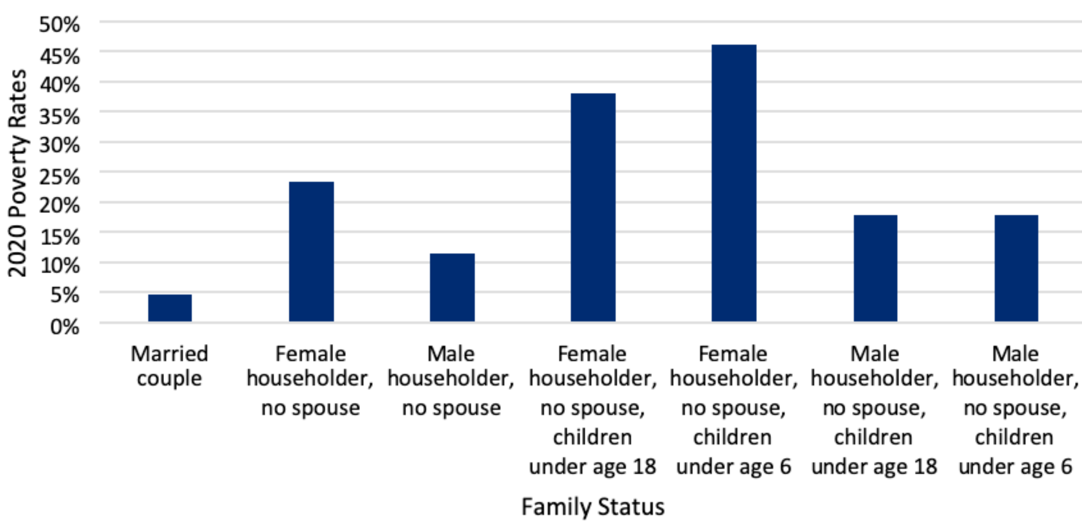
Note. Population limited to individuals aged 25 and older. In 2020, the overall poverty rate for this group was 9.5%. Data from *Income and Poverty in the United States: 2020*, by E. A. Shrider, M. Kollar, F. Chen, and J. Semega, Census Bureau, 2021 (https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2021/demo/p60-273.pdf).

Figure 5
Poverty Rates by Race



Note. Data from *Income and Poverty in the United States: 2020*, by E. A. Shrider, M. Kollar, F. Chen, and J. Semega, Census Bureau, 2021 (https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2021/demo/p60-273.pdf).

Figure 6
Poverty Rates by Family Status



Note. Data from *Income and Poverty in the United States: 2020*, by E. A. Shrider, M. Kollar, F. Chen, and J. Semega, Census Bureau, 2021 (https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2021/demo/p60-273.pdf).

Income Measures

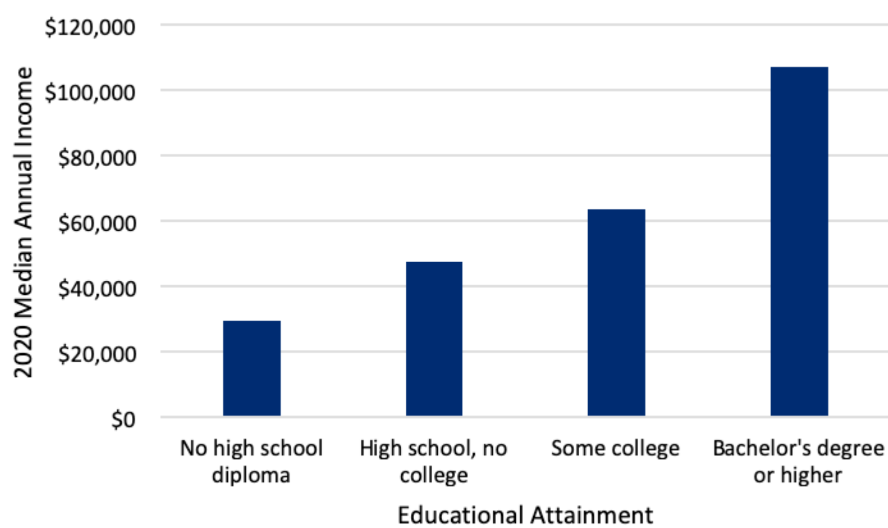
Because the official poverty measure is by definition a lack of income, group statistics in this area are also worth examining. Unsurprisingly, there is a strong inverse relationship between the median income of nearly every group and that respective group's poverty rate. This association is observed regarding educational attainment, marital status, age, household location, and race. The largest group differences are in educational attainment (**Figure 7**). The median annual income for those with no high school diploma is less than $30,000, while the amount increases by 60% for those who finish high school but do not attend college. Median annual income rises another 34% for those who attend some college but did not finish. Lastly, among those who complete at least a bachelor's degree, the median annual income is 68% higher than those who attended college but did not finish, and 262% higher than those without a high school diploma (Shrider et al., 2021).

Location also has a large influence on income. Rural areas tend to have, on average, lower incomes than urban areas, and although there are more people in poverty in urban areas, rural areas have higher rates of poverty (**Figure 8**). The median income for those in urban areas, determined by the Census Bureau as those in metropolitan statistical areas, was 37% higher in 2020 than for those living outside those areas (Shrider et al., 2021).

Just as poverty rates vary greatly by race, so does income. But another statistical relationship merits attention here. Nonmarital birth rates, median income, and poverty rates are highly correlated, as the empirical literature discussed later will attest. When grouped by race, the relationship between poverty and out-of-wedlock births is roughly one-to-three (**Figure 9**). Median annual income (**Figure 10**) among White non-Hispanics is just under $75,000, and that group had a nonmarital birth rate of 28.4%. The same rate for Blacks was 70.4%, and this group had an annual median income less than $46,000. Similarly, Asians had the highest median annual income (almost $95,000) and the lowest nonmarital birth rate (12.2%; Shrider et al., 2021).

Figure 7

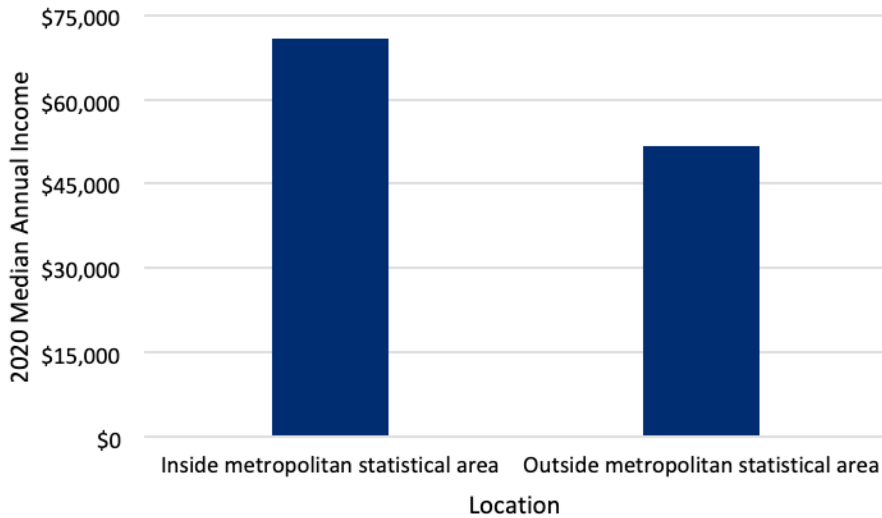
Median Annual Income by Educational Attainment



Note. Data from *Income and Poverty in the United States: 2020*, by E. A. Shrider, M. Kollar, F. Chen, and J. Semega, Census Bureau, 2021 (https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2021/demo/p60-273.pdf).

Figure 8

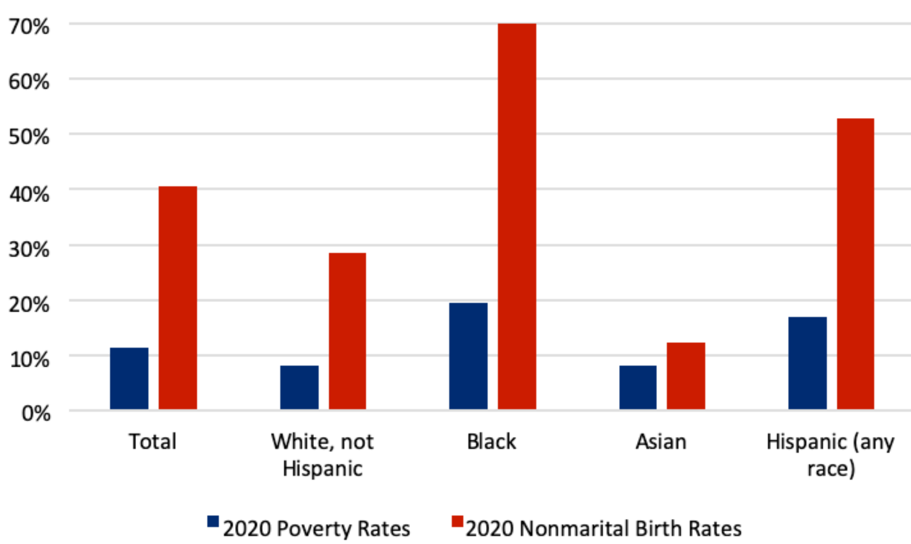
Median Annual Income by Location



Note. Data from *Income and Poverty in the United States: 2020*, by E. A. Shrider, M. Kollar, F. Chen, and J. Semega, Census Bureau, 2021 (https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2021/demo/p60-273.pdf).

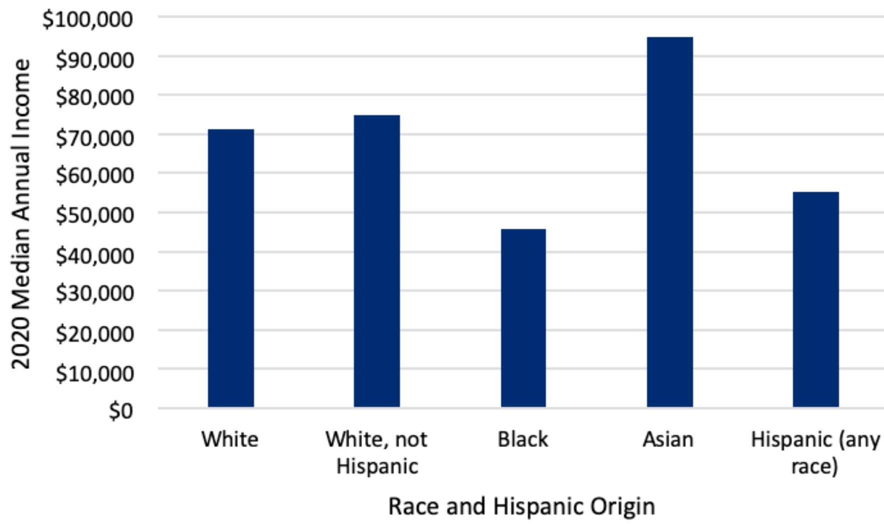
Figure 9

Poverty Rates and Nonmarital Birth Rates



Note. Data from *Income and Poverty in the United States: 2020*, by E. A. Shrider, M. Kollar, F. Chen, and J. Semega, Census Bureau, 2021 (https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2021/demo/p60-273.pdf) and Unmarried childbearing data, National Center for Health Statistics, n.d. (https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/unmarried-childbearing.htm).

Figure 10
Median Annual Income by Race



Note. Data from *Income and Poverty in the United States: 2020*, by E. A. Shrider, M. Kollar, F. Chen, and J. Semega, Census Bureau, 2021 (https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2021/demo/p60-273.pdf).

Poverty in Texas

As in the nation at large, the poverty rate in Texas (**Figure 11**) has fallen over the last decade about four percentage points, having risen about two percentage points over the preceding 30 years. In general, the poverty rate in Texas closely mirrors the national poverty rate. It is however unsurprising that, for 40 years, the Texas poverty rate has been consistently higher than the national rate, given the demographic makeup of Texas. According to the 2020 Census, the Lone Star State is 61.6% White, 18.7% Hispanic, and 12.4% Black (Census Bureau, 2021), while the country at large is 64.1% White, 16.8% Hispanic, and 12.0% Black (Jones et al., 2021). In other words, Texas has a larger proportional population of those groups who have higher rates of poverty and a lower proportional population of those groups who have lower rates of poverty.

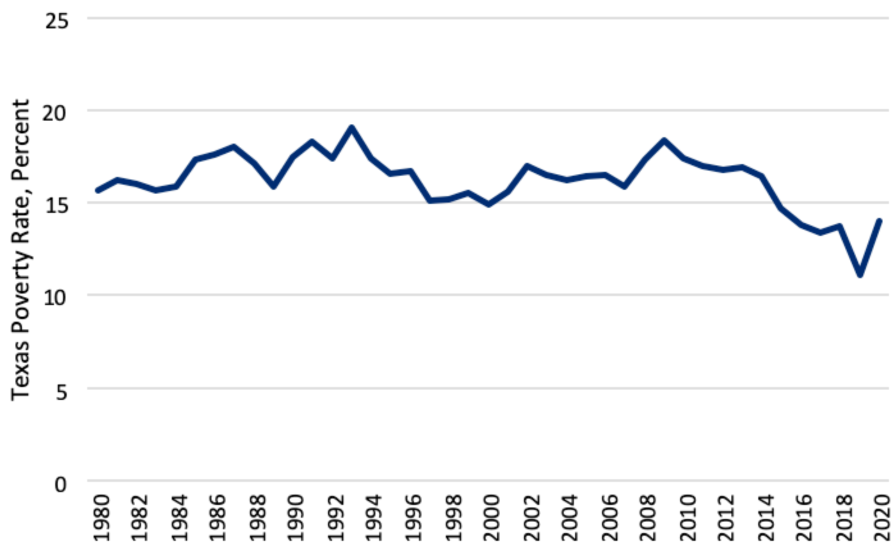
Different Measures of Poverty

Supplemental Poverty Measure

Since 2011, the Census Bureau along with the Bureau of Labor Statistics has produced a Supplemental Poverty Measure. This alternative metric for poverty incorporates "many of the government programs designed to assist low-income families and individuals that are not included in the official poverty measure" (Fox & Burns, 2021, p. 1). Consider, for example, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), unofficially known as "food stamps." The official poverty rate ignores the financial assistance provided by SNAP, whereas the Supplemental Poverty Measure takes this financial assistance into account. Among the methodological differences between the official poverty measure and the supplemental figure is that the latter includes the value of in-kind benefits[3] as well as accounting for geographic differences in the cost of living, particularly housing (DeVore, 2017). Like the official poverty measure, the supplemental version is also imperfect. Given it is based on a percentile of the U.S. income distribution, it does not measure who is below a standard of living but instead observes the relative income between groups of people. The use of survey data also introduces biases, while the nonfungibility of in-kind benefits causes their value to be overestimated (Congressional Research Service, 2017). Despite the limitations of both the official and supplemental poverty measures, a comparison can be made between Texas and other large states (**Figure 12**). These measures show that while Texas has the higher official poverty rate, the Lone Star State has the lowest supplemental poverty measure when the other factors are considered.

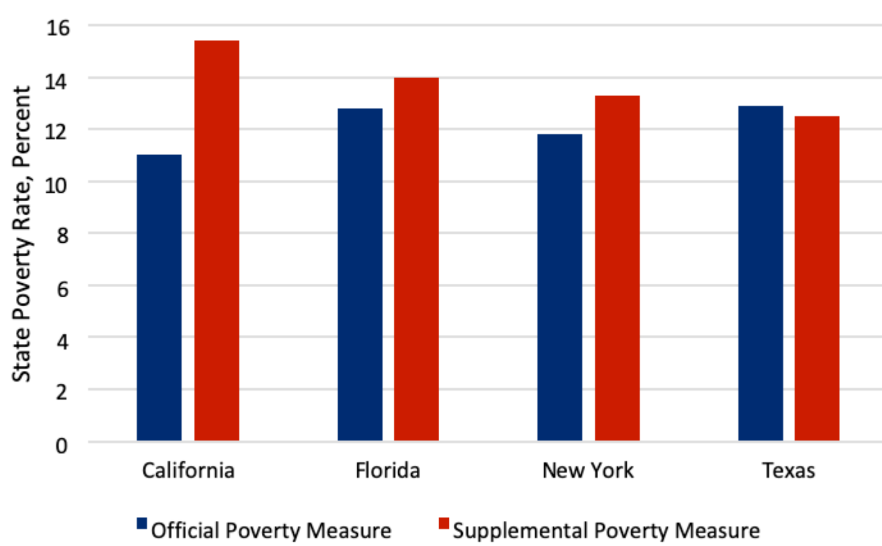
3 The inclusion of in-kind benefits and other factors like the ownership of substantial assets has a dramatic effect on the number of Americans considered to be living in extreme poverty, reducing the figure by 90% (Meyer et al., 2019).

Figure 11
Poverty Rate in Texas Over Time



Note. Census Bureau data on poverty for Texas begin in 1980. Data from *Historical Poverty Tables: People and Families – 1959 to 2020*, Census Bureau, n.d. (https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/historical-poverty-people.html).

Figure 12
Poverty Measures in the Four Largest States, 3-Year Average of 2018–20



Note. Data from *The Supplemental Poverty Measure: 2020*, Fox & Burns, 2021. (https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2021/demo/p60-275.pdf).

Consumption Poverty Measure

Both poverty measures focus on quantifying incomes; but with so many sources of income and other benefits that are difficult to denominate in dollars, it is difficult to assign a standardized income figure to many individuals with little to no earned income. The Interagency Technical Working Group on Evaluating Alternative Measures of Poverty (2020) suggested other ways to gauge poverty, such as measuring consumption instead of income. While the working group acknowledged some potential data collection problems, there are advantages to this alternative. Child support payments, for instance, need not be explicitly counted nor subtracted since the transfer directly affects consumption and is therefore implicitly already observed. Given the additional variables included in the consumption-based poverty measure, the literature finds a sharp decline in the poverty rate compared with other poverty measures over time (Corinth et al., 2022; Meyer & Sullivan, 2009, 2012). The working group also explored multiple methods of accounting for the value of health insurance while noting that each methodology had both advantages and disadvantages. Once again, assigning a value to health insurance, whether for consumption or income, is fraught with difficulties.

These are just a few of the many complex components that are part of any calculation of poverty. To date, there is no perfect measure of poverty; all existing measurement techniques involve trade-offs. Even a single factor like inflation can be measured multiple ways, and each respective yardstick will influence the threshold for poverty differently (U.S. President & Council of Economic Advisers, 2019). Furthermore, if the data and methodological procedures that are the origins of these trade-offs are not understood, grossly inaccurate estimates and conclusions can be reached about the number of people in poverty and their living conditions. For example, Winship and Rachidi (2020) found that during the early stages of the pandemic, food insufficiency had increased about 2 or 3 percentage points to 5% or 6% because of researchers using incomparable surveys, not more than 20% as some metrics indicated. Problems with data collection are yet another example of the issues that can plague assessments of poverty.

Literature Review for Connections With Poverty

There are several factors that are strongly linked with continued poverty and an inability to build income and wealth (Siebert & Singlemann, 2015).[4] The economic structure component is primarily a function of work. The addition of manufacturing jobs to agricultural communities reduces poverty due to the higher wages in the manufacturing sector (Clark, 1941), and areas more dependent on manufacturing than agriculture have lower poverty rates (Brady & Wallace, 2001; Cotter, 2002). Similarly, many service industries provide higher-paying jobs relative to both manufacturing and agriculture and further reduce poverty, as evidenced in the finance, insurance, and real estate markets (Mencken & Singlemann, 1998; Parisi et al., 2005; Rupasingha & Goetz, 2007). Employment, in general, drives down poverty, irrespective of wages, although the effect is more pronounced with higher wages (Cotter, 2002; Slack & Jensen, 2004; Gundersen, 2006, Rupasingha & Goetz, 2007). The availability of jobs has a significant impact on poverty in both the present and a decade into the future (Slack et al., 2009).

Demographic structure is primarily driven by individual lifestyle choices but also includes the effects of many public policies. Perhaps the most powerful demographic structure, and the most powerful predictor of poverty in general, is single motherhood (see **Figure 6**; Albrecht & Albrecht, 2000; Goe & Rhea, 2000; Lichter & McLaughlin, 1995; Lichter et al., 2003; Parisi et al., 2005; Singelmann et al., 2011). Siebert and Singelmann (2015) observed that "single-headed households with children have the highest poverty rates of all household types in both the United States and EU countries" (p. 52). In 2020, households headed by a single mother with children under age 6 (46.2%) were more than four times as likely as the general population (11.4%) to live in poverty and nearly six times as likely as households with married couples with children under age 6 (7.9%; Shrider et al., 2021). Single motherhood is also a strong predictor of intergenerational poverty. After controlling for extraneous factors, children raised by single mothers are statistically more likely to drop out of high school and continue living in poverty (Chetty et al., 2014; McLanahan, 1985; Sandefur et al., 1992).

Slack et al. (2009, p.363) examined multiple geographical areas where intergenerational poverty was relatively common, including all 41 Texas counties within 100 miles of the U.S.-Mexican border, the majority of which were considered "persistently poor," meaning at least 20% of the residents have been living in poverty for the last four decennial censuses. Poverty rates among these counties were more than twice the national average—29.4% versus 13.6%. Among the population in question, marriage was found to provide significant economic benefits with lower

4 The astute reader will note two facts in the following paragraphs. First, these factors have some overlap. Second, Siebert and Singlemann (2015) exclude some social pathologies, like crime, which may contribute to poverty but are already highly correlated with those factors that are examined. For example, children born to single mothers are more likely to live in poverty, commit crimes, and be victims of crime.

rates of poverty than single motherhood, although the magnitude of the effect varies by location. Age is also a factor in poverty, but its impact varies depending on other group characteristics. Metro areas with a younger Black population have higher poverty rates, while areas with an older Black population have lower poverty rates (Adelman & Jaret, 1999). Other researchers have found similar conclusions linking more youths in non-intact families to poverty (Cotter, 2002; Rupasingha & Goetz, 2007).

While other factors should be addressed, the last one and possibly the most pertinent to keeping people trapped in poverty is an incentive not to work or to be more productive. For example, a "benefits cliff" occurs when a safety-net recipient goes back to work, increases their workload, or accepts a higher rate of pay, resulting in increased total earned income—which then triggers a greater loss of payments from government programs. The Georgia Center for Opportunity (n.d.) provides a computational model to calculate benefits cliffs by family status for different states. The cliffs can be large depending on the income earned and where the individual resides. Given that this acts like an income tax when an individual loses as much if not more in safety net payments, this is known as an "implicit marginal income tax," and comes with a huge cost. Mulligan (2010, 2012a, 2012b, 2021) finds this form of a tax contributes to making a bad economic situation worse for longer because of the negative effects from returning to (or increasing) work. Because work is important to overcoming poverty, the high cost of benefit cliffs must be considered within any substantive policy reform effort to ensure individuals are incentivized to achieve full-time employment. This, along with increased access to training or quality education, will clear a path to self-sufficiency and break the cycle of poverty and dependence on government (Ford, 2021).

Governmental Safety-Net Programs in Texas

Today, many federal and state safety-net programs aim to reduce poverty (Benefits.gov, n.d.-a). Most of these programs are nationwide and are not exclusive to Texas or other states. There are also federal-state partnerships for certain programs, and the functionality of each system varies. For example, some programs are federally funded but administered by the respective states (e.g., SNAP), while other programs are jointly funded (e.g., Temporary Assistance for Needy Families or TANF). Additionally, some forms of assistance are not limited to those in poverty and provide benefits to a wider group. Means-tested programs can have an applicability threshold that is some multiple of the poverty level.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor (Benefits.gov, n.d.-b), the following "Food and Nutrition" programs are currently available to combat poverty in Texas:

- National School Breakfast and Lunch Program for Texas
- Child and Adult Care Food Program
- Commodity Supplemental Food Program
- Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
- Local Food Promotion Program
- National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs
- Seed Cotton ARC/PLC Eligibility
- Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program
- Emergency Food Assistance Program
- Women, Infants and Children Farmers' Market Nutrition Program
- Special Milk Program
- Texas Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children
- Summer Food Service Program
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

There are at least seven other categories of safety-net programs currently in place that also aim to mitigate poverty. These provide aid for housing, education, transportation, clothing, and more. In all, more than 80 federal programs are being employed to fight poverty in Texas (Government Accountability Office, 2015). Assistance is available in the following categories: Education and Training, Employment and Career Development, Family and Children Services, Financial Assistance, Grants (Health, Education, Children, & Government), Food and Nutrition, Healthcare and Medical Assistance, Housing and Public Utilities (Benefits.gov, n.d.-a).

Recommendations

The path forward must consider where we have been, where we are now, and the increased opportunities for people to find financial self-sufficiency through a job, education, training, community, and other avenues provided by civil society whereby government provisions are available as a last resort. Achieving this will take a more holistic approach to fighting poverty than just providing material assistance. This includes a robust economy with an institutional framework that supports an improved labor market, less income inequality, lower poverty, and more economic freedom (Ginn, 2018, 2021). It will also mean that, within this more prosperous framework, people will be more easily connected to a job and their community when assistance is needed. This will help build social capital while providing a more holistic approach to poverty relief for work-capable people.

To determine how to better allocate scarce taxpayer dollars and what new direction would best serve those in poverty, investigations into existing programs would provide valuable information that could serve to inform any reformations of poverty relief efforts at both the federal and state levels.[5] Safety-net recipients would likely benefit from those programs going through routine independent efficiency audits. By following the more holistic approach outlined here, there can be improved temporary safety-net programs with government as the last resort rather than the current situation of too often being the first resort. This will likely result in substantial permanent poverty alleviation, thereby reducing the scope of safety nets over time, with more opportunities to flourish in the private sector, and a more robust civil society to help those who need it.

Conclusion

Widespread U.S. poverty relief measures are almost a century old, and the elimination of poverty has been a stated policy goal of the federal government for almost 60 years. Despite about $25 trillion (adjusted for inflation) in government spending of taxpayer dollars on many safety-net programs aimed at mitigating this problem since then, the poverty rate is relatively unchanged. The current strategies and tactics have not sufficiently worked to produce results commensurate with the amount of money allocated and redistributed from the private sector. In fact, they have often worsened the problem by creating disincentives to work and slower economic activity, hurting the very people they intend to help.

By connecting people to work, education, or training, enhancing community-based case management, streamlining safety-net programs, and getting resources to those who need it most, we can create more opportunities for people to be self-sufficient—and thereby reduce the number of Americans experiencing poverty—so long as we have the will, perseverance, and right approach (Alliance for Opportunity, n.d.).

5 Find more information on poverty relief efforts, primarily at the state level, by visiting the Alliance for Opportunity website at https://allianceforopportunity.com/.

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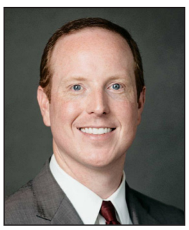

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