



ATD FOURTH WORLD

POVERTY TRUTHS

SPRING 2022 NEWSLETTER

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

PO Box 1787
Gallup, NM 87305 USA

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#PovertyTruths

Dear Friends,

There is a lot to be learned from the Covid-19 pandemic about social policies and poverty reduction. As a member of the ATD Fourth World community in the United States, I can think of three major learning points that were established during this period:

1. Social policies and programs that increase investment in individuals, families and communities can work in reducing poverty. One month after the Child Tax Credit checks stopped, childhood poverty jumped from 12% to 17% overall, with Latino and Black children experiencing the largest percentage-point increases [1].
2. Social programs are potentially beneficial for everyone and should be evaluated by their real impact on the individuals, families and communities most affected by the problems they aim to fix. "Numbers lie," a former CEO of a top US company told me recently. Hard data should be looked at through the lens of comprehensive qualitative evaluation, which includes knowledge from people experiencing poverty.
3. The implementation of ambitious social policies and innovative ways to monitor and evaluate them does not happen without political will. Political will does not emerge if everyday constituents do not care about people who are struggling. We all cared during the pandemic, and that pushed policies that were transformative for families who needed them.

Political will is fading. Priority is not given to poverty eradication even though we see policies and programs that are effective. After two years of this pandemic, can we pretend to stay blind to the challenges people in poverty face? The data is here and draws a clear picture. The stories of the people themselves tell the truth. We see by the experiences inside this newsletter that **individual will** cannot afford to fade.

These three points show that policy solutions to poverty can work. Poverty can be ended! **#PovertyTruths is about bringing together data and experience to see what is possible**, that we have solutions that are working, and the knowledge to implement others. The emergency of the pandemic pushed us forward. The knowledge that we have from people's lived experience can do the same.

We know what we need to do, let's do it.

In solidarity,



Guillaume Charvon
National Director

What has changed since we published the Poverty Myths report in 2018? We'll share updates with you throughout the year in #PovertyTruths.

How has the "rate of poverty" in the United States changed since 2018? The Covid-19 pandemic and reactions to it made almost everyone's lives harder. Did poverty increase in the United States? In this newsletter you'll find data about poverty rates and links to resources to find out more.

For those whose lives were already the hardest, what has the pandemic changed? In this newsletter you'll also find some answers to that question from ATD Fourth World members in New York City, Gallup (New Mexico) and Las Vegas.

What does data about income tell us about how the “poverty rate” in the United States changed over the last years?

The United States still has one of the *highest* poverty rates in the developed world.

According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)



Using the latest data for each country, this is the

SECOND HIGHEST POVERTY RATE

out of 36 OECD countries.

[2]

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, which measures poverty differently than the OECD, the official poverty rate in the United States in 2019 was 10.5%.

In 2020, the Census Bureau measured the poverty rate as

11.4% or **37.2 million people.**

This is the first increase in poverty after decreases the previous five years.

(for children, the rate increased from 14.4% in 2019 to 16.1% in 2020 or 11.6 million children.)

These poverty rates do not include the financial support that people received during first years of the pandemic from the federal government through the CARES Act and the CRRSA Act.



[3]

With the federal government’s Covid-19 financial support included in the data:

4.6 million children were lifted out of poverty

according to the Annie E. Casey Foundation.



[4]

When this financial support ended in December 2021:

3.7 million children were put into poverty

according to a report from the Columbia University Center on Poverty and Social Policy.



[5]

As you can see to the left, **numbers can be both measured and interpreted differently**. When looking at data, we have to look very closely at what is actually being measured and who is giving us an understanding of those numbers and why. Feel free to send other data about poverty our way.

Poverty is not adequately measured with numbers and income, either. See The Multidimensional Aspects of Poverty [6] report for a much fuller understanding of poverty.

The most useful knowledge about poverty comes from #LivedExperience. Here is some of that expertise:

"A lot of people in my neighborhood, they realize that there are a lot of resources in Astoria. But getting there and being elderly is a problem for getting those resources. Basically you have to know someone who is willing to go for you and help you get those resources. If that person can't go, you can't get those resources. That's the hard part."

- **Rosetta**

"I still see it a little bit hard for the Navajo nation to really get into being digital. People are having a hard time because having anything online is still new to a lot of people on the Navajo reservations. It's a struggle for a lot of people to understand how to log in, to get access to resources. To find solidarity, people are still there. It's just that you have to look for it." - **Erick**

"It takes a strong person to help regardless of what the pandemic was saying. People still have to say, "no, I'm strong, I'm still going to do this because this is in my heart, this is what I want to do." That's what makes people keep going and going and going. I still help people. I didn't let that stop me from doing what I need to do.

Because if you stop, then other people stop, then nobody's going to get no help. You always have to have somebody to have more courage to keep going." - **Stacey**

"I feel like people felt alone. During Covid, people sought out other people for assurance. Either I'm depressed or I'm not okay so I'm going to reach out to people because I had the time. I feel like the time situation was that they had time to sit there and care. Now that things are back to being busy, they don't care." - **Rosetta**

"It's harder now than before the pandemic, because a lot of resources back then we had. But when the pandemic hit there were a lot of people that were scared to be around people. There were a lot of people scared to open themselves and help people. That's what made it hard for a lot of people, that a lot of people couldn't get the help that they needed. It's slowly starting back up.

There are a lot of people still scared." - **Stacey**

"During the pandemic, the flea market was closed. People's livelihoods, whose source of income was in the flea market, there was no way for them to generate any income during the pandemic. Now at the flea market since everything is open, I see a lot of people selling what they normally sell but this time it's at a higher cost. I could understand why they're selling their merchandise at a higher cost. They're trying to make up for a lack of income they had when they couldn't sell." - **Erick**

"Thankfully the pandemic brought people that I already talked to closer than before. I might be busy throughout the day but when coming home I would check on them. Before the pandemic, I never used to do that. I was thinking about them but actually texting them was a type of thing that I never did. And now, because communication was solid during the pandemic, it crosses my mind to check upon them." - **Rosetta**

Resources

- [1] www.povertycenter.columbia.edu/news-internal/monthly-poverty-january-2022
- [2] data.oecd.org/inequality/poverty-rate.htm
- [3] www.census.gov/library/publications/2021/demo/p60-273.html
- [4] www.aecf.org/blog/new-child-poverty-data-illustrates-the-powerful-impact-of-americas-safety-net-program
- [5] www.povertycenter.columbia.edu/news-internal/monthly-poverty-january-2022
- [6] atdfourthworld-usa.org/map