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The Social Health of Nevada

Leading Indicators and Quality of Life in the Silver State

Income Distribution and Poverty in Nevada

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Introduction

Income and wealth inequality has been rising in the U.S. for several decades, and now the United States has one of the highest inequality rates among industrialized/Global North countries (Schaeffer 2020).

With the rising tide of inequality, our daily lives have been transformed in several ways. To ensure that young people have all of the resources they need, parents with more resources have invested more time and money into their children than ever before in the hope to maximize their life chances. Their young adult children have pushed back the familiar milestones of previous generations, taking longer to finish school, get married, and have children. While middle- and high-income parents and young people have financial means to make these adjustments, their lower income counterparts often do not. These growing changes in how resourced parents and young people can and do live their lives add to growing inequality in the U.S. (Cooper and Pugh 2020).

Highlights

- Nevada ranked 23rd in median household income in the U.S. in 2023, with an income of $76,364.
- A larger proportion of Nevadans (22%) worked in the service industry in 2023 than the rest of the U.S. (16%)
- Black and African Americans experience the highest poverty rate in Nevada (19.1%), followed by Native Americans (14.6%), Hispanic/Latinx populations (14%), Asian Americans (9.5%), Non-Hispanic White people (9.3%), and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (3.4%).

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The change that accompanies rising inequality draws attention to the income distribution and poverty patterns in our nation and the Silver State. Over the past decade, income and poverty have changed rapidly, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, which interfered with paid work for many.

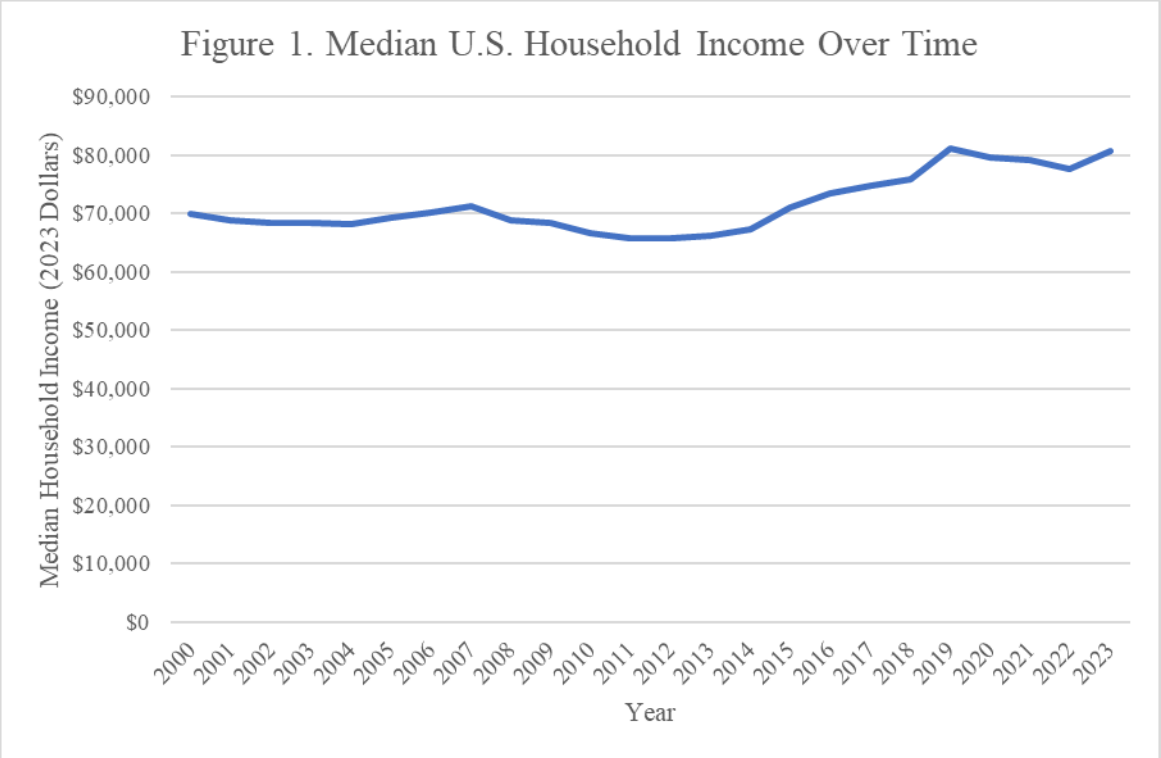
This chapter of the Social Health of Nevada report surveys the income distribution and poverty experiences in the U.S. and Nevada. It provides detailed information about how income and poverty intersect with race/ethnicity, age, gender, household composition, and disability. This overview details the programs designed to support low-income families in the state and nation, with special attention paid to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the emerging trends.

Income Inequality

The median household income in the U.S. in 2023 was $80,610, based on the 2023 Current Population Survey of the U.S. Census Bureau (Guzman and Kollar 2024). This constituted a significant increase from the 2022 median income of just $77,540.

The median household income in the U.S. has been rising since the 1970s, with dips around recessions like the 2008 financial crisis, and the COVID-19 pandemic. However, as we can see in Figure 1, both of these drops in median income have recovered or are currently recovering, with household income currently heading back toward pre-pandemic levels.

Figure 1. Median U.S. Household Income Over Time



Note 1. Made with data from the Current Population Report, Guzman, Gloria, and Melissa Kollar. 2024. Income in the United States: 2023. P60-282. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau.

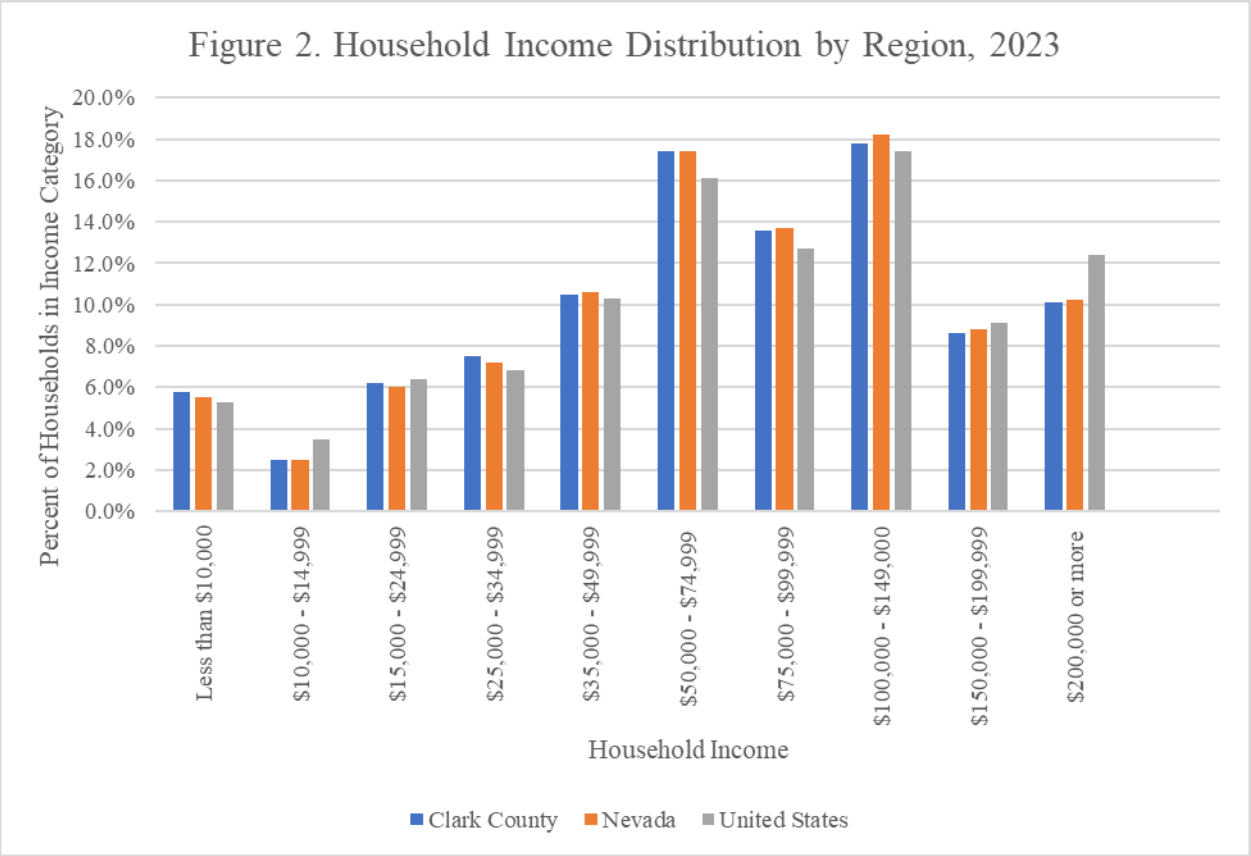
In addition to these changes, the median household income in the U.S. shows disparities related to race and ethnicity, metropolitan area status, and educational attainment. Based on the Current Population estimates of income in 2023 (Guzman and Kollar 2024):

- The median income in the U.S. in 2023 for Asian Americans was $112,800, followed by Non-Hispanic White people ($89,050), Hispanic/Latinx people ($65,540), and Black or African American people ($56,490).
- The gap between Black and White median income in the U.S. has remained remarkably consistent since 1970, meaning we have made little progress narrowing racial inequality (Schaeffer 2020).
- People living within and around a major city have higher median income ($83,590), compared to those living far outside cities ($62,520). Residents of suburbs have a higher median income than those living inside city limits.
- Those with higher education have higher median income, with people who have a Bachelor's degree or higher making a median household income of $126,800, compared to the next highest group (those with some college) with a median income of $73,610.

There are also stark differences in the U.S. when it comes to gender, especially when separating household members into individual workers. According to the same Current Population estimates:

- The median earnings for all individual workers in 2023 was $50,310 (not including other household members' earnings).
- Median earnings were starkly different between men and women, with men workers making a median of $56,280 and women workers making a median of $42,110.
- Counting only full-time year-round workers, women still made $11,000 less than men in median earnings.

The median household income in Nevada in 2023 was $76,364 based on U.S. Census American Community Survey 1-Year estimates (Table 1). This is slightly lower than the U.S. national median using the same estimates, but slightly higher than the Clark County income of $75,065, Nevada's most populated county. Figure 1 shows the distribution of household incomes in the U.S., Nevada, and Clark County.



Note 2. Made using data from the U.S. Census' American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, 2023

Looking closer at Nevada and Clark County, we observe the following patterns:

- The income distribution in Nevada and Clark County are fairly similar.
- The United States has a higher percentage of households on the very top of the income distribution (making $200,000 or more) than Nevada or Clark County.
- Nevada has the 23rd highest median household income in the country (Table 2).

As we zero in on gender, race-ethnicity, and residence area, we need to assess income inequality within specific income distribution categories. One of the most direct ways of doing this is to identify what proportion of all income earned belongs to a particular population subset. If we split everyone in the U.S. into groups based on household income, we find that income inequality has been rising in the U.S. since the 1970s, with the growth rate accelerating in recent decades (Menasce Horowitz, Igielnik, and Kochhar 2020). This has been especially true for families in the top 5% of incomes.

Based on Current Population Reports of income in 2023, the income shares in the U.S. looked like this:

- The top 20% of income earners (households making $165,300 or more) had 51.9% of all total U.S. income.

- Households with the top 5% of incomes (those with $316,100 or more) had 23% of all total U.S. income.
- The bottom 80% of household incomes (those making less than $165,100) had 48.1% of all U.S. income, less than the top 20% alone.
- The bottom 20% of household income earners had only 3.1% of all total incomes in the U.S.
- The income distribution disparities have grown since 1968, with the top 20% of household income earners now making almost 10% more of all U.S. income than they did in 1968.

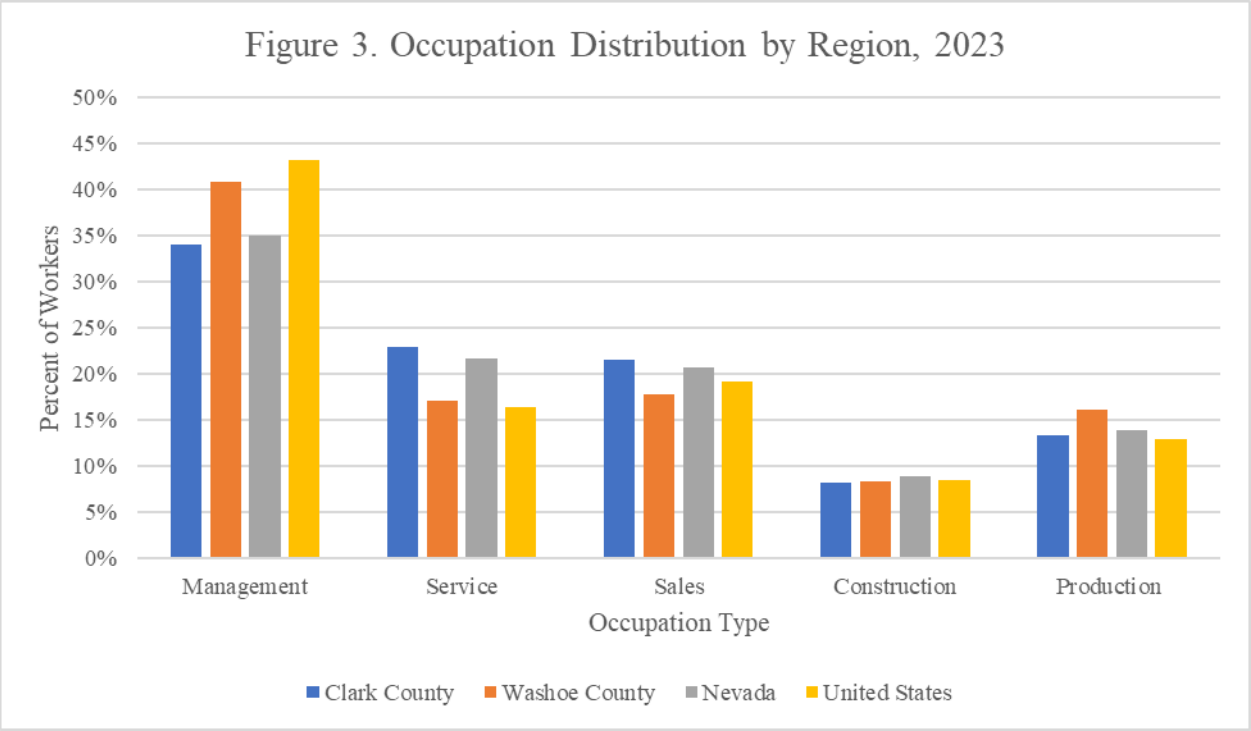
Another way to measure income inequality is to use the Gini Index of Income Inequality, which is a statistical measure of income inequality ranging from 0 to 1, where a higher number translates to higher inequality. Based on 2023 Current Population estimates:

- The highest Gini index of income inequality in the U.S. since 1967 was in 2021, with a Gini index of .494.
- In 2023, the Gini index of income inequality was .485, a stark increase from an index of .386 in 1968.

Dispelling Myths

Though many believe "rising inequality" refers to the number of people with incomes very low in the income distribution, the majority of rising inequality is attributable to those on the top of the income distribution garnering more wealth and income than ever before, leaving little for the general population. This is such an important issue driving rising inequality that many social scientists have dedicated most of their research careers to understanding the top of the income distribution pyramid and identifying policies that help support a more equal society.

A third way to measure inequality is by identifying differences in the share of the population with different types of occupations. Figure 3 shows the distribution of occupations for Clark County, Washoe County, Nevada, and the United States.



Note 3. Made using data from the U.S. Census' American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, 2023

Key facts about occupations in the U.S. and Nevada in 2023 can be seen in Table 3:

- In the U.S., 43% of the population had a management occupation in 2023.
- In Nevada, workers are employed in Management (35%), Service (22%), Sales (21%), Production (14%), and Construction (9%).
- The service industry is higher in Nevada and Clark County than the U.S. as a whole, with 23% of occupations in the service industry, compared to 16% in the U.S.
- The service industry is more concentrated in Clark County than Washoe County, where these is a higher concentration in Management (and Production to a lesser extent).

A final way to measure inequality (and one proving to be more and more important in U.S. inequality) is by measuring not just earned income, but total wealth and how wealth is distributed among adults and households. Wealth and income from sources other than labor play a large role in this inequality (Piketty, Saez, and Zucman 2018).

- Wealth inequality has risen even more drastically than income inequality, with the upper income families holding 79% of U.S. aggregate wealth in 2016 (Menasce Horowitz, et al. 2020).
- Wealth and income inequality in the US is especially high compared to other high-income global north countries (Pfeffer and Waitkus 2021).

- There is a conspicuous and long-lasting racial wealth gap in the U.S., with Black individuals in the U.S. having access to far less wealth on average than White individuals (Sullivan, et al. 2024).

Poverty

In January 1964, President Lyndon Johnson declared a "War on Poverty." This prompted the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity to adopt an Official Poverty Measure (OPM), developed by Mollie Orshansky in 1965. Orshanky's measure was based on a survey that found that families with three or more people spent approximately one third of their household income on food. According to this measure, families that spent more than one third of their income on food were classified as poor (Hurst 1992; U.S. Department of Commerce 2014).

Accepting the assumptions behind this measurement index established in 1965, the U.S. Census Bureau determines the official poverty thresholds of families based on pre-tax income and household composition every year (Institute for Research on Poverty 2024). This means that whether a household is considered to be living below the poverty line, or whether they get counted as part of the official poverty rate is determined entirely by household income before taxes, and how many adults and children are living in that household. In 2023, the poverty threshold for a family of four with two children was $30,900. This means any family of that size with household income below that amount would be considered living below the poverty line (Shrider 2024).

There are many debates about the Official Poverty Measure in the U.S. It has been critiqued for ignoring non-cash support to low-income families – things like food stamps, Medicaid, subsidized housing, and more. Nor does the measure take into account post-tax income, which economists agree is a more accurate reflection of a household's accessible resources. It also doesn't take into account any variation in poverty status by region, making no adjustment for regions that have a higher or lower cost of living. This indicator has also been criticized because it did not undergo any major updates since it was first established in the 1960s. While the survey that helped develop the measure found that families spent about one third of their income on food, many have argued that this has likely changed in recent decades, with many families spending much more on housing now than ever before, for example. Though the U.S. Census Bureau addressed some of these concerns by adding a Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM) in 2010 to better reflect 21st century poverty levels, it has not replaced the OPM which is still used for all official poverty statistics and reporting (Institute for Research on Poverty 2024).

According to the 2023 Current Population Report on Poverty in the United States (Shrider 2024):

- The official poverty rate in the U.S. in 2023 was 11.1%, or 36.8 million people living in poverty.

- Using the supplemental poverty measure, 12.9% of people in the U.S. were living in poverty.
- The current poverty rate is similar to the rate in the 1970s, with multiple rises in poverty during and immediately following various recessions throughout the U.S.' history.

Dispelling Myths

Though frequent depictions of families living below the poverty line is of families who have been poor consistently for multiple generations, the majority of poor families and individuals in the U.S. go in and out of poverty across the course of their life (Stevens 2013). Most people experience poverty "spells" that last an average of 2.8 years in the U.S.

Poverty rates in the U.S. also vary by gender, age, disability status, race and ethnicity, and household type. Current Population Report estimates and American Community Survey 1-Year estimates in 2023 demonstrate that:

- The poverty rate is higher for U.S. women (11.9%) than men (10.2%).
- The highest poverty rate is among children below the age of 18 (15.3%), followed by adults 18-64 (10%), and adults age 65 or older (9.7%).
- 24.3% of Americans with a disability live below the poverty line, compare to 10% of people without disabilities.
- By race/ethnicity, the poverty rate is highest among Black/African-American individuals (20.8%), followed by Native American people (20.6%), Hispanic/Latinx people (16.6%), Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander people (15.7%), Asian American people (9.9%), and Non-Hispanic White people (9.4%).
- 9.1% of primary families, 5.2% of married-couple families live below poverty, 23.6% of female-headed household families live below poverty, 12.4% of male-headed household families, and 19.2% of households in which all individuals are unrelated (Shrider 2024).

Dispelling Myths

These racial inequalities in poverty rates reflect inequalities in the percent of each racial/ethnic population who experienced poverty in 2023. However, this can also lead to a misconception that the populations with the lowest poverty rates do not also experience poverty. Instead, there are still more than 17 million Non-Hispanic White people who live below the poverty line in the U.S., the largest number of people living below the threshold. People from any race can experience poverty, even if some racial and ethnic groups are more economically disadvantaged (frequently through long histories and policies limiting access to economic opportunities among Americans of color).

Table 4 shows the percent of the population living below the poverty line in the U.S., Nevada, and Clark County for various groups. Poverty rates are fairly similar for Nevada and the U.S.:

- In Nevada, women have a higher poverty rate than men, with 12.8% of women and 11.1% of men living below the poverty rate.
- The poverty rate by age is incredibly similar by age range in the U.S. and Nevada, with children under 18 having the highest poverty rate of 16.1%.
- By race/ethnicity in Nevada, Black/African American people experience the highest poverty rate (19.1%), followed by Native American people (14.6%), Hispanic/Latinx people (14.0%), Asian American people (9.5%), Non-Hispanic White people (9.3%), and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander people (3.4%).
- In Nevada, poverty status is very similar to the U.S. across household type, with female-headed households having the highest poverty rate of all households.
- Nevada is tied for 21st highest poverty rate in the US among all states (Table 5).
- Poverty rates vary drastically by county in Nevada (Table 6). Esmeralda County has the highest poverty rate (27.8%), followed by Mineral County (20.7%), Eureka County (16.5%), Nye County (16.1%), Clark (12.1%), and Washoe (10.4%).

Consequences of Poverty and Inequality

Individuals who experience in poverty and have limited resources have been shown to experience negative outcomes as they age. Low-income families are often hit the hardest by larger economic trends. Researchers have found, for example, that recessions in the U.S. negatively impact low-income families the most – they lose more wealth and are more likely to experience unemployment (Cooper and Pugh 2020).

Poverty is linked to overall stress for each family member. Low-income parents are often trying to do the impossible by providing as much as they can for their children while scraping to make ends meet. Even when parents are able to apply for and receive support from federal and state programs (which can be a struggle in itself), they are still faced with the stresses of trying to hold on to those benefits and find ways to survive once their support is cut off. Children experience stresses that come with poverty, e.g., watching parents struggle to survive and looking to do what they can to help the family get by. Many low-income children and teens become responsible for their siblings, care for disabled family members, especially during times of great financial strain.

Children living in poverty are less likely to get higher education and more likely to have negative health outcomes when they have experienced poverty in childhood (Hartley, Toppenberg, and Dhongde 2024). Health problems beset disadvantaged children in several ways. Many poor families live in lower resource neighborhoods that are more likely to be exposed to toxic environments. Those same neighborhoods may also have less access to fresh food (often called “food deserts”), which make it difficult to prepare fresh and healthy food.

Academic success is also connected to poverty and family income, with low-income children more likely to experience difficulties with education and academic achievement (Duncan, Magnuson, and Votruba-Drzal 2017). Without adequate resources available to parents and children, it becomes hard to prioritize education, the phenomenon known

to middle- and high-income families as well. However, juggling competing obligations is especially difficult for low-income children.

Increasingly, low- and middle-income people in the U.S. live very different lives. While middle- and high-income young adults take longer to get married, finish schooling, and have children, low-income adults are more likely to have children without getting married and are likely to have more complex families – children from multiple relationships, custody arrangements, and other blended family arrangements. Because of these changing family circumstances, many of our social systems are not built to support low-income families, and they haven't caught up. For example, few educational institutions have fully accessible childcare for students, making it even more difficult for low-income parents to get higher education.

Daily life differences extend even farther. Though we tend to believe that "we all have the same 24 hours in the day," access to resources impacts how those 24 hours are used. While some families can afford to do time-saving things like drive themselves to work rather than waiting on a city bus, choose low-maintenance living arrangements that have minimal unexpected and disastrous repairs and issues, or arrange to leave work early to catch a child's appointment or sporting event, low-income parents often have fewer resources and less flexible jobs.

Federal Programs to Reduce Poverty

Several federal programs have been developed to reduce poverty and provide resources and support for families and individuals who experience extreme financial strain. The programs include support in the forms of 1) cash assistance, 2) food support, 3) housing support, 4) medical care, 5) educational assistance, 6) job training, 7) childcare, 8) child support enforcement and facilitation, and 9) tax credits.

The two primary forms of cash assistance for low-income families are Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). SSI gives cash assistance to those who both have limited financial resources and are either 65 years of age or older or have a disability.

- As of December 2023, 53,058 Nevadans received SSI support (Social Security Administration 2024).

Prior to 1996, the chief cash assistance program in our country was Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), which provided a minimum monthly income to single parents, specifically. After 1997, TANF replaced this program, giving even more decision-making power to states in distributing federal funds. How TANF operates varies significantly from state to state. Thus, Nevadan's experience with this program may differ from that of residents of other states.

- In 2023, more than 800,000 families in the US received TANF assistance, with Nevada serving 5,882 (Office of Family Assistance 2024a).

- In 2023, 24.6% of all TANF funds were used nationally for basic assistance, compared to 20.2% of the Nevada funds designated for the same purpose (Office of Family Assistance 2024b).
- How these funds are spent vary across the nation. In Nevada, the majority of these funds are spent on child welfare services (28.2%), followed by basic assistance (20.2%), program management (14.5%), child care (13.7%), non-recurrent short term benefits (10.3%), work supports and supportive services (7.2%), and less than 3% each on work, education, and training, services for children & youth, pre-kindergarten, and out-of-wedlock pregnancy prevention.

Here is a comparative summary of Nevada TANF policies:

- Nevada is one of 16 states that requires TANF applicants to look for a job either before or while the application is processed (Knowles et al. 2023).
- There are work requirements in most states, including Nevada, and Nevada is one of 32 states that dictates that single-parent households lose all benefits if work requirements are not followed.
- Nevada has a 60-month limit of TANF benefits.

Because SSI focuses on support for older and disabled individuals, and TANF focuses on support for families with children, there are few direct cash supports for low-income working-age adults who do not have young children or a disability. Though not based on financial need and instead based on work history and age, Social Security also itself plays a large role in supporting low-income older adults, lifting millions of adults and families out of poverty each year.

Dispelling Myths

Many believe cash assistance programs are supporting able-bodied individual adults who don't want to work. That is not the case. Neither of our major federal programs support child-free able-bodied adults. The majority of people relying on TANF are required to work in order to receive benefits.

In addition to cash assistance programs, two major federal programs provide direct food support to those in need. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as the Food Stamps Program) issues monthly benefits through Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT), using a plastic card that is designed to look like a normal debit card.

- In 2024, SNAP served 505,500 Nevada residents (15% of the state population), compared to 12% of the entire U.S. population (Nchako 2025).
- 72% of those who received SNAP in Nevada had incomes below the poverty line.
- SNAP helped lift 57,000 people above the poverty line in Nevada between 2015 and 2019.

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) specifically support pregnant women, breastfeeding women, and women with children under five years old.

- 48% of those eligible for WIC participate in Nevada (Kessler et al. 2023)

Although many use cash assistant programs like SSI and TANF to help pay for housing, there are many who struggle to afford housing costs in the U.S. and Nevada.

- Over half of U.S. renters spend more than 30% of their income on housing.
- The median rent for an apartment in the U.S. in 2023 was $1,410/month.

There are multiple programs that help support affordable housing for low-income families in the U.S. Though fully public housing projects (usually referred to as "the projects") have largely gone out of favor and are not frequently built as new constructions, there are a number of lasting public housing units still in use. Since the 1970s, the Section 8 housing program has become one of the main forms of housing support in the U.S., giving federal rent subsidies or vouchers to tenants renting in private landlord-owned units. These Section 8 housing arrangements may also be referred to as "Housing Choice Vouchers." In addition to Section 8 vouchers, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provides tax credits and support to develop (sometimes repurposing older public housing projects) mixed-use rental properties that have a set amount of Section 8 and low-income units. These programs work to move away from public housing that concentrates low-income households in one area, and instead include low-income units among other new development rental units. Thus, in 2023:

- 10.1 million people in the U.S. rely on federal rental assistance to be able to afford housing.
- Housing Choice Vouchers are the most common type of rental assistance received (48%), followed by Section 8 project-based housing (25%), public housing (17%), USDA rural rental assistance (6%), and supportive elderly and disability support (3%).

Federal medical care assistance programs include Medicaid, Indian Health Service (IHS), and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Medicaid provides cost-free health insurance to eligible recipients. Like many other federal programs, Medicaid eligibility requirements and benefits vary by state. There are currently 760,981 individuals in Nevada enrolled in Medicaid and CHIP (Medicaid.gov n.d.). In addition to Medicaid and CHIP, the Affordable Care Act of 2010 created the Health Insurance Marketplace, where low-income individuals and families who do not qualify for Medicaid can still access low-cost, means-tested health insurance coverage.

Educational assistance for low-income families includes pre-kindergarten programs like Head Start, Early Head Start, and college financial assistance programs. Head Start and Early Head Start programs provide educational services for low-income pregnant

women and their children ages 0-2 (Early Head Start) and 3-5 (Head Start). Head Start programs are run by local organizations. In addition to early childhood resources, there are a variety of grants, loans, and work opportunities available to college students. Students can qualify for financial aid to attend higher education institutions in Nevada, with 58.3% of aid disbursed through federal funds, 17.3% by the state, 19.2% by the institution, and 5.2% by private or other sources (Carvalho et al. 2024). In the 2022-2023 academic year, 31,107 students in the Nevada System of Higher Education received federal Pell Grants (Carvalho et al. 2024). Pell grants are awarded to the most financially struggling higher education students and are federally funded.

There are various job training programs funded by the federal government, including summer youth employment programs, Job Corps, and training for low-income people (or for those receiving other forms of aid). Many of these programs are covered by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014.

Childcare support in the U.S. is limited and rarely supported by federal money. The Family and Medical Leave Act entitles employees to 12 weeks of unpaid leave in a 12-month period for childbirth or other family care leave. However, this unpaid leave often means low-income new parents are left with few resources and support for childcare. Childcare costs an average of $247 per week in Nevada for a 1 year old child in 2022 (The Children's Cabinet 2022). There are federal programs that can support childcare (Early Head Start included), but these are varied by state. In addition, the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit gives a tax credit to parents with young children (under 13) who had to put children in childcare in order to look for work.

The federal Office of Child Support Enforcement partners with state and local governments to enforce the financial responsibility parents have to their children. About 7 in 10 custodial parents who were supposed to receive child support in 2017 received at least some payments (Grall 2020). Because 30% of parents do not receive regular payments, the need for clear support for custodial parents is clear.

In addition to the programs outlined, a final form of federal support for low-income families is the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). The EITC subsidy is a refundable tax credit based on a working family's income and number of children. Here are some key facts about the EITC:

- The median income of families who received the EITC was $15,197 in Nevada in 2018 (Waxman and Hinh 2021).
- The EITC greatly reduces poverty, lifting 5.6 million people out of poverty in 2018 (IRS n.d.).

The COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic had global effect, creating major changes in daily life. Organization of work and the income of families made from that work also went through transitions, sometimes in an expected way.

In terms of income inequality, the top 20% of income earners received some of the highest shares of the total U.S. income during the pandemic. Though these inequalities settled a bit by 2023, this was a marked moment in the history of inequality in the U.S.

- In 2020 and 2021, the households with the top 20% of incomes held 52.2% and 52.7% of the total U.S. income, respectively.
- In 2020 and 2021, the households with the top 5% of income held 23.5% of total U.S. income in both years.

The gender distribution of income inequality also drastically changed during the pandemic. The number of women in the workforce dropped from 2019 to 2021, especially for the most disadvantaged families (Fry 2022). The total earnings of full-time year-round women workers dipped more drastically than for men during the pandemic (Guzman and Kollar 2024). Researchers have argued that is in part because mothers filled most of the childcare gap left during pandemic lock-downs.

Figure 4 shows the Gini Index of Income Inequality from the year 2000 to 2023. The Gini coefficient has been rising for decades; reaching its highest point since 1968 in 2021.



Income inequality during the pandemic also shaped experiences of the virus itself. Income inequality linked to mortality during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the U.S.

having the highest number of deaths due to COVID-19 (Elgar, Stefaniak, and Wohl 2020).

In contrast to rising inequality during the pandemic, poverty rates did not have as drastic increases during the pandemic.

- The official poverty rate stayed fairly consistent throughout the pandemic, rising from 10.5% in 2019 to 11.5% and 11.6% in 2020 and 2021, respectively. The rate has remained in the same range since.
- The supplemental poverty rate went from 11.8% in 2019 to 9.2% and 7.8% in 2020 and 2021, respectively (Shrider 2024).

Poverty similarly shaped health and mortality experiences with the COVID-19 virus. COVID-19 deaths in the U.S. were associated with poorer and more urban counties (Finch and Hernández Finch 2020). Though COVID-19 cases were also associated with more disadvantaged counties in the early weeks of the pandemic, by April 2020, more affluent counties had more confirmed cases.

Government assistance support was also impacted by the pandemic. The number of families relying on Unemployment Insurance (UI) rose during the pandemic, and new unemployment support was created (the Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation program the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program) (Shantz et al. 2023). This meant state public support programs needed to develop a strategy to support families during change and uncertainty.

Nevada counted regular UI benefits as a form of income for TANF-receipt, which changed families' qualification for support during the pandemic (Shantz et al. 2023). Nevada joined 35 other states in lifting work requirements for TANF receipt, matched 8 states in lifting job search requirements and 12 states in lifting time limits.

Action Items and Policy Implications

Most federal programs regarding poverty and inequality in the U.S. grant considerable amount of power to individual states in how they administer support. The continuity of federal programs for low-income families, however, is vitally important for the U.S. and Nevada. These federal programs help families get out of poverty and provide struggling citizens with what they need to survive – food and shelter.

With growing inequality in our country, policies and programs that support low-income families and place limits on the ever-widening wealth gaps in the U.S. are more urgent than ever.

There are multiple things we can all do to address issues surrounding poverty and inequality in Nevada:

- Advocate for programs that support low-income people in the Silver State, emphasizing how they help families get out of poverty
- Develop programs and supports that acknowledge the growing divide in how families live their lives across the income spectrum. More accessible childcare at workplaces and educational institutions could help low-income parents work and further their education while managing the stresses of parenting
- Strive to increase accurate representations of poor and low-income populations in news and media, further dispelling myths
- Gather more data and continue research on poverty, inequality, and the most effective ways to address it
- Advocate for policies that address the top end of growing inequality.
- Create more local programs and policies that support low-income families and individuals in Nevada outside of federal support

Conclusion

Inequality continues to rise in the United States. As a result, the gap is growing between the lives and experiences of people at the top of the income distribution and those at the bottom.

This rising inequality will likely continue to spark debates about how to address it and what is to be done. Efforts are underway to limit or completely cut the federal programs that keep American children, families, and individuals safe and alive. Despite myths that these programs are largely misused by individuals capable of working but wishing to live on aid indefinitely, research has shown conclusively that this is not the case. Multiple federal programs have time limits, stipulate that recipients must be too old or disabled to work, and successfully help lift families out of poverty. Many of these federal programs do an important job regardless of their long-term effectiveness at combatting poverty and inequality. SNAP, for example, is essential for combatting hunger and helps millions of children and families eat enough to survive. Medical care through Medicaid similarly saves lives for the lowest income Americans.

The ways poverty and inequality intersect with things like age, gender, race and ethnicity, and disability, also means that the future of research and policy around inequality must also attend thoughtfully to the multiple disadvantages families may be facing. All of these issues impact both the Nevada and the U.S. as a whole and highlight the various ways to address rising inequality and give support to families living in and near poverty.

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Appendix

Table 1. Household Income in the U.S., 2023 (Based on ACS 2023 Estimates)

	Percent in Income Category by Region		
	Clark County	Nevada	United States
Household Income			
Less than $10,000	5.8%	5.5%	5.3%
$10,000 - $14,999	2.5%	2.5%	3.5%
$15,000 - $24,999	6.2%	6.0%	6.4%
$25,000 - $34,999	7.5%	7.2%	6.8%
$35,000 - $49,999	10.5%	10.6%	10.3%
$50,000 - $74,999	17.4%	17.4%	16.1%
$75,000 - $99,999	13.6%	13.7%	12.7%
$100,000 - $149,000	17.8%	18.2%	17.4%
$150,000 - $199,999	8.6%	8.8%	9.1%
$200,000 or more	10.1%	10.2%	12.4%
Median income	$75,065	$76,364	$77,719
Mean income	$101,495	$103,067	$109,160

Note: Made using American Community Survey (ACS) 1-Year Estimates, 2023

Table 2. Median Household Income by State, 2023

Rank	State	Median Household Income	Mean Household Income
1	District of Columbia	$108,210	$160,752
2	Massachusetts	$99,858	$138,516
3	New Jersey	$99,781	$138,153
4	Maryland	$98,678	$129,366
5	New Hampshire	$96,838	$124,500
6	California	$95,521	$134,491
7	Hawaii	$95,322	$124,713
8	Washington	$94,605	$129,161
9	Utah	$93,421	$117,752
10	Colorado	$92,911	$124,578
11	Connecticut	$91,665	$131,007
12	Virginia	$89,931	$123,132
13	Alaska	$86,631	$114,201
14	Minnesota	$85,086	$113,293
15	Rhode Island	$84,972	$113,091
16	New York	$82,095	$122,227
17	Delaware	$81,361	$109,486
18	Vermont	$81,211	$105,931
19	Illinois	$80,306	$110,930
20	Oregon	$80,160	$107,214
21	Arizona	$77,315	$104,620
22	North Dakota	$76,525	$98,324
23	Nevada	$76,364	$103,067
24	Texas	$75,780	$106,549
25	Idaho	$74,942	$98,653
26	Georgia	$74,632	$103,146
27	Wisconsin	$74,631	$97,894
28	Nebraska	$74,590	$101,268
29	Pennsylvania	$73,824	$102,578
30	Maine	$73,733	$97,157
31	Florida	$73,311	$103,634
32	Wyoming	$72,415	$93,304
33	South Dakota	$71,810	$96,650
34	Iowa	$71,433	$93,942
35	Montana	$70,804	$94,069
36	North Carolina	$70,804	$98,139
37	Kansas	$70,333	$93,781
38	Indiana	$69,477	$91,900
39	Michigan	$69,183	$93,806
40	Missouri	$68,545	$93,074
41	South Carolina	$67,804	$92,578
42	Ohio	$67,769	$93,500
43	Tennessee	$67,631	$94,180
44	New Mexico	$62,268	$85,782
45	Alabama	$62,212	$85,530
46	Oklahoma	$62,138	$85,650
47	Kentucky	$61,118	$83,499
48	Arkansas	$58,700	$81,056
49	Louisiana	$58,229	$83,303
50	West Virginia	$55,948	$76,585
51	Mississippi	$54,203	$76,305

Note: data based on U.S. Census American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, 2023

Table 3. Occupation Distribution by Region

	Clark County		Washoe County		Nevada		United States	
Occupation Type								
Management	389,209	34%	104,533	41%	545,564	35%	70,919,638	43%
Service	261,406	23%	43,669	17%	336,285	22%	26,983,243	16%
Sales	245,439	21%	45,424	18%	321,467	21%	31,425,450	19%
Construction	93,072	8%	21,177	8%	137,144	9%	13,849,501	8%
Production	152,797	13%	41,128	16%	216,127	14%	21,169,161	13%
Total	1,141,923		255,931		1,556,587		164,346,993	

Note: Made using data from the American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, 2023

Table 4. Percent Below Poverty by Demographics and Region

	Clark County	Nevada	United States
Total	12.7%	12.0%	12.5%
Age			
Under 18	17.7%	16.1%	16.0%
18-64	11.3%	11.0%	11.5%
65+	11.3%	10.4%	11.3%
Sex			
Male	11.8%	11.1%	11.3%
Female	13.6%	12.8%	13.6%
Race & Ethnicity			
White, Non-Hispanic	10.0%	9.3%	9.4%
Black or African American	18.9%	19.1%	20.8%
Hispanic or Latinx	14.0%	14.0%	16.6%
Native American or Alaskan Native	10.5%	14.6%	20.6%
Asian	9.4%	9.5%	9.9%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	4.4%	3.4%	15.7%
Other	15.8%	15.2%	17.9%
Two or More Races	14.0%	13.6%	14.6%
Disability Status			
With Disability		22%	24.3%
Without Disability		9%	10%
Household Type			
Married couple		5%	5%
Female-headed		10%	10%
Male-headed		3%	3%

Note: Made using American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, 2023

Table 5. Poverty Status by State

Rank	State	% Below Poverty	Rank	State	% Below Poverty
1	Louisiana	18.9%	27	Montana	11.7%
2	Mississippi	18.0%	28	Illinois	11.6%
3	New Mexico	17.8%	29	Iowa	11.3%
4	West Virginia	16.7%	30	Wyoming	11.3%
5	Kentucky	16.4%	31	Kansas	11.2%
6	Oklahoma	15.9%	32	Rhode Island	10.8%
7	Arkansas	15.7%	33	Wisconsin	10.7%
8	Alabama	15.6%	34	Delaware	10.5%
9	New York	14.2%	35	Nebraska	10.5%
10	District of Columbia	14.0%	36	Alaska	10.4%
11	Tennessee	14.0%	37	Maine	10.4%
12	South Carolina	13.9%	38	Massachusetts	10.4%
13	Texas	13.7%	39	Connecticut	10.3%
14	Georgia	13.6%	40	Washington	10.3%
15	Michigan	13.5%	41	Virginia	10.2%
16	Ohio	13.3%	42	Hawaii	10.1%
17	North Carolina	12.8%	43	Idaho	10.1%
18	Arizona	12.4%	44	North Dakota	9.8%
19	Florida	12.3%	45	New Jersey	9.7%
20	Indiana	12.3%	46	Vermont	9.7%
21	Oregon	12.2%	47	Maryland	9.5%
22	California	12.0%	48	Colorado	9.3%
23	Missouri	12.0%	49	Minnesota	9.3%
24	Nevada	12.0%	50	Utah	9.0%
25	Pennsylvania	12.0%	51	New Hampshire	7.2%
26	South Dakota	11.8%			

Note: Made using American Community Survey 1-Year estimates, 2023

Table 6. Poverty Rate by Nevada County

Rank	**County**	**% of Adults Below Poverty**
1	Esmeralda	27.8%
2	Mineral	20.7%
3	Eureka	16.5%
4	Nye	16.1%
5	Clark	12.1%
6	Washoe	10.4%
7	Carson City	10.1%
8	Lyon	10.1%
9	White Pine	9.8%
10	Churchill	9.7%
11	Elko	9.6%
12	Humboldt	9.3%
13	Lander	9.1%
14	Pershing	9.0%
15	Douglas	8.8%
16	Lincoln	6.9%
17	Storey	4.0%

Note: Data from Social Explorer, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2023