

Facts About Poverty: Lee County

According to the 2026 Federal Poverty Level (FPL) Guidelines, 100% of poverty is \$15,960 for one person and \$33,000 for a household of four.

- 13% of the population in Lee County lives below 100% FPL, and 21% of children¹
- 40% of children live below 200% of FPL¹
- 52% of public school students are eligible for free or reduced lunch in Lee County²
- 1 in 6 Iowa working households can not meet a basic needs budget³
- 55% of households in poverty were female single parent households¹
- 12% of whites in Lee County live below 100% FPL¹
- 25% of Black or African Americans in Lee County live below 100% FPL¹
- Of those over age 25 in Lee County:
 - 7.5% have no high school diploma.
 - 38% in Lee County (26% across the US) only have a high school diploma.¹
- Common Good Iowa notes a self-sufficiency hourly wage is estimated to be \$22.60 for a single parent of one young child in Lee County.³
- 17% of the population of Lee County (compared to 13% in Iowa) has a disability¹
- 41% of the population of Lee County (compared to 19% in the US) is considered to live in rural areas.¹
- In March 2026: There were 172 households receiving FIP/TANF/Welfare benefits with an average household benefit of \$330. There were 1,981 households with 3,898 individuals receiving SNAP (food) benefits averaging \$332 per household.⁶

The majority of Americans will encounter poverty. 76% will have spent at least one year below 150% of the official poverty line by the time they reach age 75.⁴

- Poverty has often been understood by the U.S. public as something that happens to others. Yet by looking across the adult life span, we can see that poverty touches a clear majority of the population.⁴
- We don't all start on a level playing field. Differences in parental incomes and resources exert a major influence over children's ability to acquire valuable skills and education. These differences in human capital will, in turn, strongly influence how well children compete in the labor market, and therefore help to determine the extent of their economic success during the course of their lives.⁴
- Poverty can cause chronic stress which can affect many areas of life including physical health.
 - People in problem debt are three times as likely to have thought about suicide in the past year. There is rarely one single factor that drives people to take their own life. Instead, typically, a range of social issues, life events, cognitive and personality factors are combined. However, there is a strong link between problem debt and suicide.⁷
- Poverty affects us all. It affects taxes, children, schools, friends, businesses, employees, coworkers, crime, drugs, community, housing values, neighborhoods, healthcare systems, utility costs, county funding, etc.

¹American Community Survey. 2020-2024.

²NCES - Common Core of Data. 2023-2024.

³Common Good Iowa. Cost of Living in Iowa 2024. <https://www.commongoodiowa.org/data/cost-of-living-in-iowa>

⁴Mark Rank. Confronting Poverty. Facts and Myths. <https://confrontingpoverty.org/>

⁵Decennial Census 2010.

⁶HHS Dashboard. https://hhs.iowa.gov/dashboard_welcome#snap-fip

⁷Money and Mental Health Policy Institute. The Facts. <https://www.moneyandmentalhealth.org/>