

The History of Welfare

An Introduction to the History of Welfare in America

Welfare in the United States commonly refers to the federal government welfare programs that have been put in place to assist the unemployed or underemployed. Help is extended to the poor through a variety of government welfare programs that include Medicaid, the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program, and Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC).

Historical Poverty Rate in the US

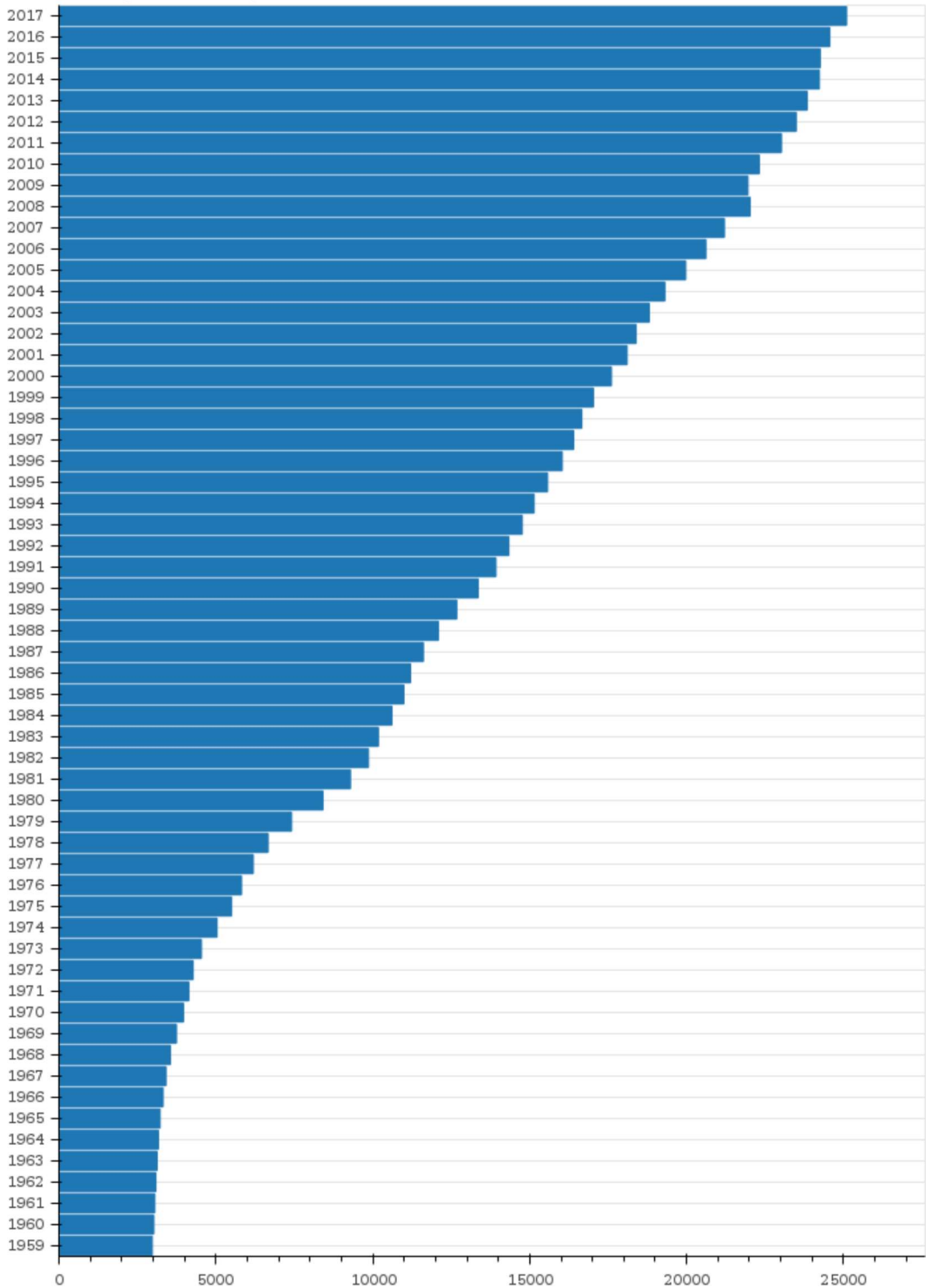
Welfare is a fluid topic that cannot be discussed without first understanding the history of poverty in the United States. Many welfare programs are tied directly to the poverty line, which is defined federally on an annual basis.

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The poverty line is dependent on the members in a household. For example, in 2017 the poverty line for a single adult was \$12,488, but for a family of four it was \$25,094. In 2000, those numbers were \$8,791 and \$17,604, respectively.

Here is a chart of the poverty line, defined annually for a family of four from 1959-2017 as a reference point.

Poverty Line History (in Dollars) From 1959-2017



Early History

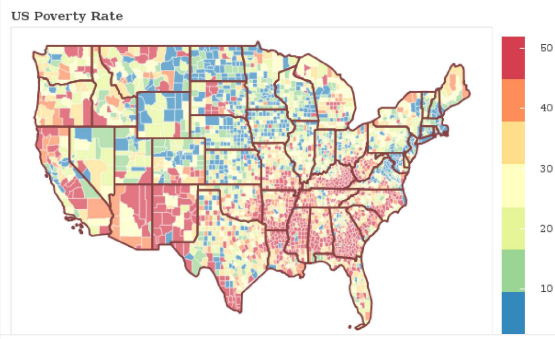
The history of welfare in the U.S. started long before the government welfare programs we know were created. In the early days of the United States, the colonies imported the British Poor Laws. These laws made a distinction between those who were unable to work due to their age or physical health and those who were able-bodied but unemployed. The former group was assisted with cash or alternative forms of help from the government. The latter group was given public service employment in workhouses.

Throughout the 1800's welfare history continued when there were attempts to reform how the government dealt with the poor. Some changes tried to help the poor move to work rather than continuing to need assistance. Social casework, consisting of caseworkers visiting the poor and training them in morals and a work ethic was advocated by reformers in the 1880s and 1890s.

Prior to the Great Depression, the United States Congress supported various programs to assist the poor. One of these, a Civil War Pension Program was passed in 1862 and provided aid to Civil War Veterans and their families.

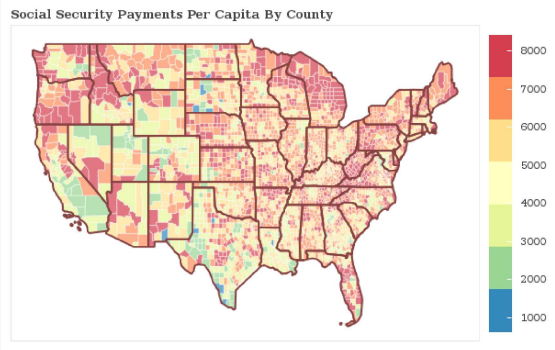
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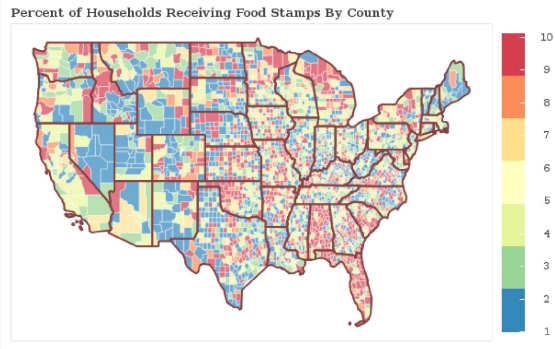


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Those who seek welfare information can find such information on the Internet or by looking under United States Government in their



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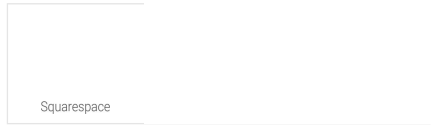
☰ Benefit Category

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🕒 Education Training	71
🕒 Employment Assistance	93
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2. Provide transparency on government assistance spending at a National, State and Local level.

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