1275 First Street NE, Suite 1200
Washington, DC 20002

Tel: 202-408-1080
Fax: 202-408-1056

center@cbpp.org
www.cbpp.org

September 5, 2025

To Understand Next Week's 2024 Census Data, Keep the Bigger Story About Government's Impact on Poverty, Health Coverage in Mind

By Arloc Sherman, Gideon Lukens, and Joseph Llobrera

On Tuesday, September 9, the Census Bureau will release data on poverty, income, and health insurance coverage for 2024. In the short term, the data may reveal some modest advances in income (which may, nonetheless, be notable in contrast with the negative coverage the economy received at the time) as well as a moderate loss of health coverage due to the scheduled expiration of temporary COVID-era health programs.

Put in longer-term context, the data will highlight the powerful impact policymakers' decisions have on people's lives. Figures will show government programs lifting large numbers of people above the poverty line, in striking contrast with the cuts enacted in the Republican megabill in July and additional cuts proposed by the Trump Administration in its budget proposal.

On health coverage, the story of the last several decades is one of important, if insufficient, progress in expanding coverage.[1] These improvements have been driven by expansions in coverage through Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and the Affordable Care Act marketplaces, culminating in a record low share of people who lacked health insurance in 2023. Unfortunately, rather than building on that progress, President Trump and the congressional Republican majority's megabill provides large tax cuts for wealthy households while taking health coverage away from millions of people, taking us in the wrong direction.

The long-term story on poverty is also one of real, but insufficient, progress[2] — with much of the progress coming from improvements in tax-based and non-cash supports, like refundable tax credits and food assistance. Here, too, the megabill moves us in the wrong direction, with deep cuts that will take food assistance away from people with low incomes.

While people from all races and ethnicities need assistance at various points during their lifetimes, the megabill's cuts threaten to expand the still-deep inequities long experienced by those who face the most economic discrimination and poverty, including Black, Latino, and Indigenous people.

With this long-term context, here are five points to keep in mind about 2024's data.

1. **Official poverty and income figures will chiefly reflect the state of the private economy.**

Figures on household pre-tax income and the official poverty measure (OPM) will capture the effect of changes in earnings and other cash income sources, such as Social Security and unemployment benefits, after inflation. Previously released economic data do not suggest dramatic changes in 2024. Overall economic growth was slightly above average in 2024, for example, and average weekly earnings rose 0.8 percent faster than inflation, suggesting household income might grow modestly. The employment rate of prime-age workers (aged 25-54) held steady at 80.7 percent, suggesting poverty might change relatively little as well.

These income and OPM figures are based on cash income before taxes and do not include government non-cash benefits or tax credits, including major poverty-reducing programs such as SNAP (food assistance), the Earned Income Tax Credit, and the Child Tax Credit.

2. **The more comprehensive supplemental poverty measure (SPM) will show the effects of government assistance programs, many of them recently cut or proposed for cuts, which could affect poverty and health insurance.**

The SPM will provide the best measure of the impact of government assistance on poverty.

Poverty as measured by the SPM is likely to have risen in 2024. One contributing factor may be expiration of temporary COVID-related relief in 2023. Expiration of SNAP emergency allotments contributed to a 5 percent decline in the value of total SNAP benefits in 2024 after adjusting for inflation. In 2023, SNAP lifted 3.4 million people above the SPM poverty line, Census data show.

Complicating the picture, a larger factor pushing up the SPM data is likely to be an increase in the SPM's poverty thresholds, due in part to shifts in consumer spending data *prior* to 2024. These effects will make the change in SPM poverty from 2023 to 2024 harder to interpret.

- SPM thresholds rose more than 5 percent in 2024, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), which calculates the SPM thresholds.[3] The rise partly reflects a 4.0 percent increase in prices from 2023 to 2024 for food, clothing, shelter, and other necessities that make up the SPM threshold. The rest of the increase relates to growth before 2024 (from 2018 through 2023) in inflation-adjusted spending on necessities among households with children.[4]
- Pre-2024 spending growth may partly reflect positive news in the form of a temporary rise in consumption following pandemic relief.[5] We anticipate pre-2024 changes and their effect on the poverty thresholds could add as many as 1.2 million people to the SPM poverty count (about 0.4 percentage points in the SPM poverty rate) in 2024.
- The reason spending increases between 2018 and 2023 affect the 2025 SPM thresholds is that, to avoid large year-to-year swings, the threshold calculations include as one factor a moving average of spending on a set of necessities, not single-year changes.

For this reason, the OPM may offer a clearer view of how changes in the *economy* affected low-income families from 2023 to 2024. The faster-than-inflation jump in the value of the SPM thresholds means it may not be as useful for year-to-year comparisons, although it will provide a clearer view of the number of people in 2024 whose overall resources from cash, tax-based benefits, and near-cash benefits were too low to afford the basics.

Another option for comparing poverty in 2024 and 2023 is to use alternative "anchored SPM" estimates, which may be available on Tuesday from the Census Bureau, CBPP, and other researchers.[6] Such estimates use a threshold adjusted by year-over-year inflation instead of the more complex threshold adjustment in the standard SPM.

3. **The share of people without health coverage will have likely increased due to expiring COVID-era relief, mitigated by increased enrollment in ACA marketplace coverage — progress that will reverse if the expanded premium tax credits in place in 2024 and 2025 are not extended.**

The share of people who are uninsured was on the decline beginning in 2020, falling to a record low in 2023. However, it likely increased in 2024, departing from this trend.

The expiration of the COVID-related provision that allowed Medicaid enrollees to maintain continuous coverage would be the primary driver of an increase in the uninsured rate in 2024. The end of continuous coverage in March 2023 required states to redetermine eligibility for their entire Medicaid caseloads. These redeterminations continued well into 2024 for most states, and average monthly Medicaid enrollment dropped by 10 million people from 2023 to 2024.[7] (Notably, the continuous coverage provision helped drive down the uninsured rate from 2020 to 2023 by safeguarding Medicaid coverage.) Many people who met the eligibility criteria for Medicaid lost coverage due to the red tape involved in the re-evaluation of eligibility, while others lost coverage because, without the continuous coverage provision, they no longer met those criteria.

Continued gains in Affordable Care Act (ACA) marketplace coverage, spurred by policies that made coverage more affordable, mitigated the loss in coverage in 2024. Enhancements to premium tax credits, first enacted in March 2021, continued to make ACA marketplace coverage more affordable and millions of people who lost Medicaid after the end of the COVID provisions newly enrolled in marketplace coverage.[8] Average monthly marketplace enrollment increased by about 5 million people from 2023 to 2024.[9] ACA marketplace coverage has more than doubled from 2021 to 2025.

Preliminary data from the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) indicate a 0.6 percentage point increase in the uninsured rate in 2024.[10] Similarly, in June the Department of Health and Human Services projected a 0.4 percentage point increase in the uninsured rate.[11]

Next week's figures will include data from the Current Population Survey (CPS), slated for September 9, and the American Community Survey (ACS), due on September 11. Both the ACS and CPS are key surveys for health insurance, with the ACS having a larger sample and a more consistent methodology for health insurance data over time. In 2023 the ACS fell to a record low of 7.9 percent of people who were uninsured, while the CPS was statistically unchanged from its 7.9 percent record low in 2022.[12]

4. **Cuts in the Republican megabill, tariffs, and other Trump policies are projected to reduce health coverage, lower future income, and increase SPM poverty.**

Overshadowing the 2024 figures will be the massive policy changes in the Republican megabill enacted in July, which can be expected to make millions more people uninsured and raise health care costs for millions of others.

When combined with tariffs and additional budget cuts, the Administration's policy choices in 2025 are expected to raise prices, lower median income, and push many people with incomes already below the poverty line deeper into poverty.

Cuts to Health Care

Both Medicaid and marketplace coverage are expected to plunge due to $1.1 trillion of cuts in the harmful Republican megabill, which the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) projects will cause 10 million people to become uninsured by 2034. Combined with the law's failure to extend the enhanced premium tax credits and its other harmful ACA marketplace rule changes, CBO projects that roughly 15 million people will lose coverage and become uninsured by 2034.[13]

Major health care cuts in the law include taking away Medicaid from people who are eligible for the ACA Medicaid expansion but can't show that they meet burdensome work requirements; other red tape that will block eligible people from enrolling in health coverage; and taking away health coverage, across all major programs, from most categories of immigrants living lawfully in the U.S., including those who have been granted humanitarian protections, like refugees.

The expiration of the enhanced premium tax credits, set to occur at the end of the year unless Congress acts to extend them, would immediately cause millions to lose coverage and become uninsured. Health care costs would rise substantially for almost all marketplace enrollees, with 4.2 million people becoming uninsured by 2034, according to CBO estimates.[14]

Cuts to Food Assistance

The SNAP program will be cut by $187 billion through 2034 (about 20 percent) under the enacted megabill, the largest cut to SNAP in history.

Based on our analysis of CBO's projections, about 4 million people, including children, seniors, veterans, and individuals with disabilities, will see the food assistance they need to afford groceries terminated or cut substantially as a result of the Republican megabill.[15] These cuts will push somewhat upward on poverty (as measured by the SPM) as early as 2026 and make many more families with incomes below the poverty line ever poorer.

One change will cut billions in federal funding for most states' food benefits and then require those states to backfill for the federal cut. A state that cannot afford to pay all of its required cost share through revenues or shifting funds from other vital public services would have two main choices: opt out of the program entirely and end SNAP benefits in the state or take away SNAP benefits from a large number of eligible households to reduce overall program costs and the state's share of those costs (though states have limited flexibility to change SNAP eligibility or benefit rules). The impact of this provision will depend on whether and how deeply states cut food assistance and how many states opt to terminate SNAP entirely.

Another SNAP cut takes food assistance away from people who cannot document sufficient work hours, putting more than 5 million people at risk of losing at least some of their food assistance and ending SNAP for an estimated 2.4 million people in a typical month. The work requirement for the first time will cover parents whose youngest child is at least 14 years old and people aged 55-64 who do not live with children.

Cuts and Missed Opportunities to Improve the Child Tax Credit

Republican lawmakers pointedly left millions of children in low- and moderate-income families out of the megabill's modest Child Tax Credit expansion, while also dropping many children from eligibility for the credit.

The megabill's Child Tax Credit expansion (which raised the maximum credit from $2,000 per child to $2,200 per child for 2025) will provide no help to about 1 in 4 children under age 17 (17 million children), and only partial help to another 2 million children, because their families' incomes are too low to qualify for the full credit.[16] For example, a couple with two children and income less than $41,500 won't get the full credit in 2025. The megabill also eliminates eligibility for the credit for children who are U.S. citizens or have lawful immigration status if they do not have at least one parent with a Social Security number, affecting roughly 2 million children by one estimate.[17] These Child Tax Credit changes will combine to push upward on SPM poverty.

If data allow, CBPP plans to estimate on Tuesday how many fewer children would have been below the poverty line in 2024 if the megabill's modest Child Tax Credit expansion had been in effect in 2024 and how much more effective it would have been at reducing poverty if the full $2,200 credit was available to children in lower-income families.

Costly Tariffs and Additional Assistance Cuts Will Likely Lead to More Poverty

Other Trump Administration policies may also create headwinds for the economy in future years that may push downward on inflation-adjusted median income and increase or deepen poverty.

- The Administration has proposed and implemented high taxes on imported goods, known as tariffs, which increase prices of imported goods[18] and are likely to put upward pressure on prices overall, downward pressure on inflation-adjusted income, and upward pressure on the official poverty measure and the SPM, particularly after 2025.
- The Administration's large-scale deportations have particularly affected critical industries, such as child care and construction, which some economists worry could decrease employment and wages of citizens and non-citizens alike and raise prices on consumers,[19] pushing upward on poverty.
- Housing cuts, which are proposed in the Administration's 2026 budget and included in the House Appropriations Committee, would, if enacted, deepen SPM poverty over time.[20]
- A regulatory plan to reduce or end SSI benefits for 400,000 low-income older and disabled people would further deepen OPM and SPM poverty.[21]

5. Tuesday's figures are likely to be trustworthy, but federal data integrity faces threats.

While there are growing reasons to be concerned about political influence on data-producing agencies, we believe the data Census releases next week, and the data contributed to the release by BLS, will not be tainted by political influence and will continue to reflect the integrity of the Census Bureau and BLS staff.

At the same time, there are legitimate concerns about the future accuracy of federal data, including Census data. These concerns stem from recent acts of political interference — such as firing a respected BLS commissioner, selectively removing public data from federal websites,[22] and eliminating an independent scientific advisory panel — and longer-term challenges, such as a growing problem of underfunding federal statistical agencies.

Many household surveys have faced falling response rates in recent years (67 percent in the data used for 2023's CPS income and poverty release, compared with over 80 percent before the pandemic) and growing differences between those who complete the survey and those who don't.[23] Partly as a result, the accuracy of CPS income and poverty findings already varies widely from year to year, Census has concluded.[24] Funding is needed to boost response rates through strategies such as increasing online response options and increasing follow-up with non-respondents, but Census Bureau funding fell 6 percent from 2015 to 2025 after adjusting for inflation.[25] Federal statistical agencies will require additional funding if they are to keep producing reliable data that are widely viewed as unsurpassed worldwide.

---

[1] Elizabeth Zhang, "Uninsured Rates Remained Low in All Three Surveys, Decreased in Most States Since 2019," CBPP, September 12, 2024, https://www.cbpp.org/blog/analyzing-the-census-bureaus-2023-poverty-income-and-health-insurance-data?entry_uuid=f9a44dcf-4ffe-436b-8077-1f5a48006dae#entry.

[2] Danilo Trisi and Matt Saenz, "Economic Security Programs Reduce Overall Poverty, Racial and Ethnic Inequities," CBPP, updated July 1, 2021, https://www.cbpp.org/research/poverty-and-inequality/economic-security-programs-reduce-overall-poverty-racial-and-ethnic.

[3] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024 Research Supplemental Poverty Measure Thresholds, updated April 30, 2025, https://www.bls.gov/pir/spm/spm_thresholds_2024.htm.

[4] SPM thresholds grow at the same rate as a five-year moving average of median spending levels (more precisely, an average of the 47th through 53rd percentile of spending) on basic needs including food, clothing, shelter, utilities, telephone, and internet service, among households with children. The 2024 thresholds reflect spending data for approximately 2019 through 2023, inflated to 2024 dollars based on price changes for food, clothing, and the other necessities. The 2023 thresholds reflect spending for approximately 2018 through 2022 in 2023 dollars.

[5] By design, the SPM threshold formula gradually incorporates rising societal living standards as reflected in typical households' spending on basic needs. Under the formula, any faster-than-inflation increase in typical households' spending on basic needs between 2018 and 2023 — even those, for example, due to temporary assistance received in 2023 or saved during the COVID pandemic — would also lift the 2024 thresholds and push upward on SPM poverty. Relief efforts such as the expanded Child Tax Credit were found to increase basic needs expenditures in the pandemic. See Jake Schild *et al.*, "Effects of the Expanded Child Tax Credit on Household Spending: Estimates on U.S. Consumer Expenditure Survey Data," BLS Working Papers, June 2, 2023, https://www.bls.gov/osmr/research-papers/2023/pdf/ec230010.pdf.

[6] Census SPM data begin with 2009. If data permit, Columbia University's Center on Poverty and Social Policy (https://povertycenter.columbia.edu/) plans to update historical data tables back to 1967 using the SPM and the anchored SPM by the end of the day on Tuesday, September 9.

[7] Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), Monthly Medicaid & CHIP Enrollment Data, https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/national-medicaid-chip-program-information/medicaid-chip-enrollment-data/monthly-medicaid-chip-application-eligibility-determination-and-enrollment-reports-data.

[8] Edwin Park, "Marketplace Enrollment Among Those Losing Medicaid Coverage During Unwinding at Lowest Rate Since September 2023," Georgetown Center for Children and Families, June 5, 2024, https://ccf.georgetown.edu/2024/06/05/marketplace-enrollment-among-those-losing-medicaid-coverage-during-unwinding-at-lowest-rate-since-september-2023/.

[9] CMS, "Effectuated Enrollment: Early 2025 Snapshot and Full Year 2024 Average," https://www.cms.gov/files/document/effectuated-enrollment-early-snapshot-2025-and-full-year-2024-average.pdf.

[10] Robin Cohen *et al.*, "Health Insurance Coverage: Early Release of Estimates from the National Health Interview Survey, 2024," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, June 2025, https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhis/earlyrelease/insur202506.pdf.

[11] Sean Keehan *et al.*, "National Health Expenditure Projections, 2024-33: Despite Insurance Coverage Declines, Health to Grow as Share of GDP," Health Affairs, Vol. 44, No. 7, June 25, 2025, https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hlthaff.2025.00545.

[12] Gideon Lukens, "Affordable Care Act Improvements Push Uninsured Rate to Another All-Time Low, Though Share of Uninsured Children Rose," CBPP, September 12, 2024, https://www.cbpp.org/blog/affordable-care-act-improvements-push-uninsured-rate-to-another-all-time-low-though-share-of.

[13] CBPP, "By the Numbers: Harmful Republican Megabill Will Take Health Coverage Away From Millions of People and Raise Families' Costs," updated August 27, 2025, https://www.cbpp.org/research/health/by-the-numbers-harmful-republican-megabill-will-take-health-coverage-away-from.

[14] In December 2024, CBO projected that 2.2 million more people would be uninsured in 2026, rising to 3.7 million in 2027. In June 2025, CBO projected that the number of people who are uninsured will have risen to 4.2 million by 2034. CBO, "The Effects of Not Extending the Expanded Premium Tax Credits for the Number of Uninsured People and the Growth in Premiums," December 5, 2024, https://www.cbo.gov/publication/59230, and CBO, "Estimated Effects of the Number of Uninsured People in 2034 Resulting From Policies Incorporated Within CBO's Baseline Projections and H.R. 1, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act," June 4, 2025, https://www.cbo.gov/publication/61463.

[15] CBPP, "By the Numbers: Harmful Republican Megabill Takes Food Assistance Away From Millions of People," updated August 14, 2025, https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/by-the-numbers-harmful-republican-megabill-takes-food-assistance-away-from.

[16] Sophie Collyer *et al.*, "Children left behind by the H.R.1 OBBBA Child Tax Credit," Columbia University Center on Poverty and Social Policy, Aug 6, 2025, https://povertycenter.columbia.edu/sites/povertycenter.columbia.edu/files/content/Publications/Children-Left-Behind-OBBBA-Child-Tax-Credit-CPSP-2025.pdf.

[17] Julia Gelatt, Randy Capps, and Michael Fix, "Nearly 3 Million U.S. Citizens and Legal Immigrants Initially Excluded under the CARES Act Are Covered under the December 2020 COVID-19 Stimulus," Migration Policy Institute, January 2021, https://www.migrationpolicy.org/news/cares-act-excluded-citizens-immigrants-now-covered.

[18] Gbenga Ajilore, "The Republican Agenda's Triple Threat to Black Households' Economic Well-Being," CBPP, August 7, 2025, https://www.cbpp.org/research/economy/the-republican-agendas-triple-threat-to-black-households-economic-well-being.

[19] Ben Zipperer, "Trump's deportation agenda will destroy millions of jobs: Both immigrants and U.S.-born workers would suffer job losses, particularly in construction and child care," Economic Policy Institute, July 10, 2025, https://www.epi.org/publication/trumps-deportation-agenda-will-destroy-millions-of-jobs-both-immigrants-and-u-s-born-workers-would-suffer-job-losses-particularly-in-construction-and-child-care/.

[20] Will Fisher and Erik Gartland, "Rental Assistance Time Limits Would Place More Than 3 Million People — Half of Them Children — at Risk of Eviction and Homelessness," CBPP, July 18, 2025, https://www.cbpp.org/research/housing/rental-assistance-time-limits-would-place-more-than-3-million-people-half-of-them.

[21] Kathleen Romig and Devin O'Connor, "Trump Administration Poised to Cut SSI Benefits for Nearly 400,000 Low-Income Disabled and Older People," CBPP, August 7, 2025, https://www.cbpp.org/research/social-security/trump-administration-poised-to-cut-ssi-benefits-for-nearly-400000-low.

[22] Mitchell Hartman, "Federal data has been disappearing under Trump," Marketplace, July 28, 2025, https://www.marketplace.org/story/2025/07/28/federal-data-has-been-disappearing-under-trump.

[23] U.S. Census Bureau, "Current Population Survey 2024 Annual Social and Economic (ASEC) Supplement," cpsmar24.pdf, pp. 8-9.

[24] For example, the published SPM child poverty rate was biased upward in 2020 (that is, 3.8 percentage points too *high* compared with corrected estimates) but biased downward (0.3 percentage points too *low*) in 2021. U.S. Census Bureau, "National Experimental Well-Being Statistics (NEWS)," July 14, 2025, https://www.census.gov/data/experimental-data-products/national-experimental-wellbeing-statistics.html.

[25] CBPP analysis of President's Budget Appendices for fiscal years 2017 and 2026.