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U.S. Census Data Show Rochester Poverty Rate And Child Poverty Rate Increases

Rochester, NY – New data released by the U.S. Census Bureau for the most recent five-year period indicates an increase in overall poverty rates and child poverty rates throughout the city of Rochester.

The data, from 2013 to 2017, shows the overall poverty rate rose from 32.8 percent to 33.1 percent and also indicates that:

- Rochester’s **child poverty rate** grew from 50.5 percent to 51.9 percent;
- The city’s rate of **extreme poverty** (below half the federal poverty line) increased from 16.3 percent to 16.8 percent; and
- Rochester now ranks 3rd in overall poverty among the nation’s 75 largest metropolitan areas. Rochester had been ranked 4th.

These statistics were compiled by the Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative in partnership with ACT Rochester based on information gathered by the Census Bureau’s five-year American Community Survey. This survey uses a larger sample size, making it the most comprehensive and reliable measure of poverty.

“These results underscore the importance of a systemic approach to address the pervasive, long-standing, and deeply rooted poverty that plagues our community,” says Dr. Leonard Brock, executive director of the Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative.

Using data from this latest survey, we updated the list of the 10 poorest cities among the top 75 metropolitan areas in the United States. In 2013, Rochester ranked fifth. Rochester was 4th last year and now ranks 3rd behind Detroit and Cleveland.

The 10 Poorest Cities Among Top 75 U.S. Metropolitan Areas		
Rank By Poverty Rate	City	Poverty Rate
1	Detroit, MI	37.9%
2	Cleveland, OH	35.2%
3	Rochester, NY	33.1%
4	Dayton, OH	32.7%
5	Buffalo, NY	30.9%
6	Hartford, CT	30.5%
7	Cincinnati, OH	28.7%
8	Fresno, CA	28.4%
9	Birmingham, AL	28.1%
10	Milwaukee, WI	27.4%

To put Rochester's poverty rate further into context, we have annually compared it to poverty rates of 17 other principal cities in similar-sized metropolitan areas (those within 200,000 of Rochester's total population). This benchmark group includes Buffalo, Hartford, Conn.; Richmond, Va.; Birmingham, Ala.; Tulsa, Okla.; and Louisville, Ky.

Among this benchmark group, the Census data found that Rochester continues to rank 1st in overall poverty, childhood poverty, and extreme poverty.

Poverty Rates Among Rochester's Benchmark Cities				
	City	Poverty Rate: Overall	Poverty Rate: Under 18	Extreme Poverty Rate
1	Rochester, NY	33.1%	51.9%	16.8%
2	Buffalo, NY	30.9%	47.2%	14.3%
3	Hartford, CT	30.5%	40.9%	15.5%
4	Fresno, CA	28.4%	40.1%	10.8%
5	Birmingham, AL	28.1%	45.4%	10.6%
6	New Orleans, LA	25.4%	38.3%	13.4%
7	Richmond, VA	25.2%	40.5%	12.9%
8	Tucson, AZ	24.1%	32.4%	10.6%
9	Grand Rapids, MI	22.5%	30.6%	7.5%
10	Worcester, MA	21.8%	31.2%	13.6%
11	Bridgeport, CT	20.8%	30.5%	7.5%
12	Tulsa, OK	20.0%	31.0%	8.3%
13	Albuquerque, NM	18.2%	25.5%	6.9%
14	Salt Lake City, UT	17.8%	22.4%	8.6%
15	Oklahoma City, OK	17.1%	25.8%	6.4%
16	Louisville, KY	16.7%	24.4%	6.1%
17	Raleigh, NC	14.0%	19.7%	5.4%
Principal cities in all metro areas within 200,000 population (+/-) of Rochester				

"Poor education, racial inequities, and concentrated poverty continue to challenge our city's families and future," says Jennifer Leonard, president and CEO of Rochester Area Community Foundation. "Together we are working to understand and reverse decades of urban decline, even as our city draws new residents in search of a better life. The most recent statistics just strengthen our commitment."

As a Collective Impact organization, RMAPI is organizing partners to collaborate in ways never experienced here before, by coordinating and aligning institutions to adopt common priorities, policies, practices, and shared measures, which would allow for an integrated system that achieves visible progress at the individual and community levels. "We will only achieve lasting poverty reduction by creating systemic changes, and RMAPI contributes to poverty reduction by remaining focused on increasing access to basic needs, decreasing concentrations of poverty, and increasing household income," says Brock. RMAPI began in late 2015, late in the five-year period measured by the current statistics.

In order to create the greatest opportunity for poverty reduction, Brock says RMAPI has focused on two critical areas — increasing the affordability and accessibility of basic needs, and improving workforce development.

The first step in this multi-year effort has focused on creating process changes, which include ongoing efforts to map the system related to basic needs and workforce development, identifying short-term and long-term changes within organizations and finding new ways to collaborate, says Dr. Brock.

There are a number of immediate measures in place to address basic needs and workforce development through RMAPI's partners. RMAPI is also facilitating a service provider mapping exercise that will identify areas in need of improvement and help partners better coordinate their efforts.

In the next five to seven years, these process changes will lead to systems changes, with critical processes and players actively improving their collaboration and outcomes, improving the broader system. These will lead to population changes in the next 10-15 years, with mature interventions functioning effectively in an integrated system that is responsive to changing needs and continually improving the quality of life in our community.

“As RMAPI's partners work toward these long-term changes, we will continually assess our own goals, align partners, identify policy changes needed to bring long-term poverty reduction and create a system that addresses poverty at its root causes,” Brock says. “We are encouraged by the strides we have made toward creating this system, but know there is much more work to be done.”

For more details on the Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative, visit www.uwrochester.org/RMAPI.

For more details on the earlier poverty reports, visit <http://www.racf.org/Reports> or <http://www.ACTRochester.org/Poverty>.